EARLHAM COLLEGE
LIBRARY
RICHMOND, IND.

SEPTEMBER 1955

COMMENTARY

Negotiating an End to the Cold War — G. F. HUDSON
The Birthday of the World — ERNST SIMON
New Mexico's Fading Color Line — ALBERT ROSENFELD
The Consultative Conference in London — A BRITISH OBSERVER
Free the Canaries from Their Cages!—A Story — ARTHUR GRANIT
The Dark Age of Medieval Jewry — ALLAN TEMKO
America's New Religiousness — WILL HERBERG
Inscription on the Flyleaf of a Bible—A Poem — DANNIE ABSE
The Fate of Otto Freundlich — EDOUARD RODITI
From the American Scene
Comedian in a Business Suit — MORRIS FREEDMAN
Cedars of Lebanon
The Binding of Isaac
On the Horizon
Marty and His Friends and Neighbors — GERALD WEALES
The Study of Man
Social Mobility Again—and Elites — HERBERT LUETHY

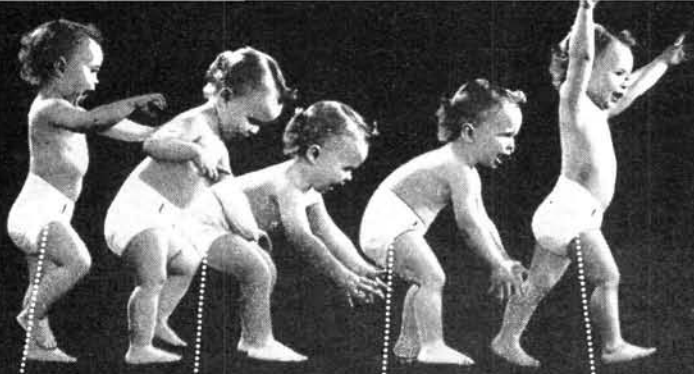
BOOKS IN REVIEW

Granville Hicks — Leslie A. Fiedler — Judd L. Teller
Nathan Glazer — Henry F. Graff

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

50c



Made of CREAMY LATEX

NON-ALLERGENIC

"WATER"-PROOF Guaranteed protection

LONGER LASTING WASHES IN SECONDS

FOR PERFECT PROTECTION EVERYWHERE...

WITHOUT CUTTING CIRCULATION ANYWHERE...

S-T-R-E-T-C-H-E-S 4 times its size

"KINDLY" EDGES Won't bind or cut

SEAMLESS, STITCHLESS Won't chafe or irritate

SMOOTHER, SOFTER For tender skin

No wonder MORE MOTHERS BUY PLAYTEX THAN ANY OTHER MAKE!

KEEP YOUR BABY "SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE"*

IN PLAYTEX® BABY PANTS

MIRACLE STRETCH. No other panty has it. Let your own hand prove it.

*T. M. ©1954 International Latex Corp'n. PLAYTEX PARK, Dover Del.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

A Statement of Aims

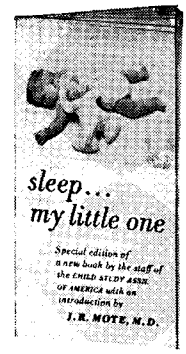
In sponsoring COMMENTARY, *the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. Its pages will be hospitable to diverse points of view and belief, and it hopes to encourage original creative endeavor in the various fields of culture.*

The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY'S *contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of* COMMENTARY *by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.*

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

IRVING M. ENGEL, *President*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

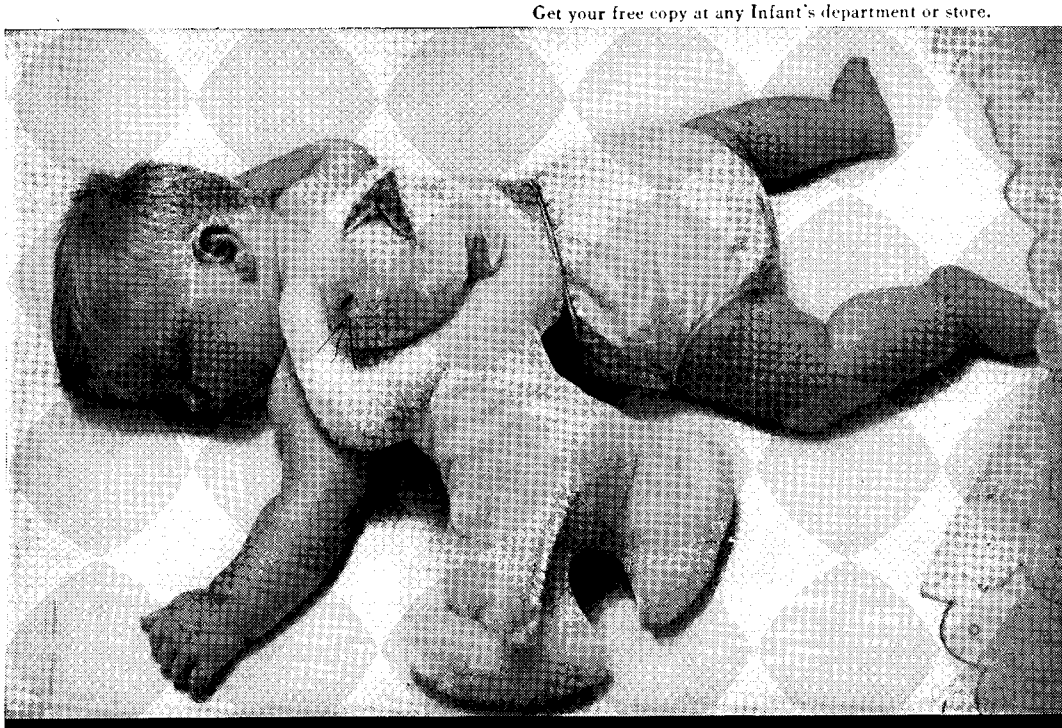

sleep...
my little one
Special edition of a new book by the staff of the CHILD STUDY ASSOC. OF AMERICA with an introduction by
J. R. MOTE, M.D.

℞ For mothers— from Kleinert's

A warmly understanding booklet on sleep patterns and problems of infant and child . . . prepared especially for Kleinert's by the CHILD STUDY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA. With an introduction by the distinguished medical consultant to Kleinert's,

J. R. MOTE, M.D.

Get your free copy at any Infant's department or store.



Doctor-approved Softex Pants are better for baby... asleep or awake!

• They actually help *prevent* diaper rash, chafing, chapping, urine burn. • Can't overheat baby like ordinary pants; Softex is wetproofed *without* rubber. • Lightest weight of all leading brands tested; they weigh less than an ounce. • They cannot bind baby anywhere. • So safe! Acid-proof, allergy-free. • Won't crack, peel or stiffen; they're washing-machine-washable with mild soap flakes or powder. • Kleinert's Softex Pants in white and baby colors, $1.00. All sizes. (Baby is sleeping on Kleinert's Dry-Downe flannel-covered Rubber Sheet. White or pastels, crib to carriage sizes, 75¢ to $3.50.)

COMMENDED BY THE CONSUMER SERVICE BUREAU OF PARENTS' MAGAZINE

K® Kleinert's

SOFTEX BABY PANTS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

September 1955 VOLUME 20, NUMBER 3

Negotiating an End to the Cold War	*G. F. Hudson*	193
The Birthday of the World	*Ernst Simon*	200
Inscription on the Flyleaf of a Bible *A Poem*	*Dannie Abse*	202
New Mexico's Fading Color Line	*Albert Rosenfeld*	203
The Consultative Conference in London	*A British Observer*	212
Free the Canaries from Their Cages! *A Story*	*Arthur Granit*	219
The Dark Age of Medieval Jewry	*Allan Temko*	228
America's New Religiousness	*Will Herberg*	240
The Fate of Otto Freundlich	*Edouard Roditi*	248
From the American Scene Comedian in a Business Suit	*Morris Freedman*	255
Cedars of Lebanon The Binding of Isaac		262
On the Horizon Marty and His Friends and Neighbors	*Gerald Weales*	265
The Study of Man Social Mobility Again—and Elites	*Herbert Luethy*	270
Letters from Readers		274
Books in Review		
Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement, by Marshall Sklare	*Nathan Glazer*	277
The Ecstasy of Owen Muir, by Ring Lardner, Jr.	*Granville Hicks*	280
Israel's Emerging Constitution, 1948-1951, by Emanuel Rackman	*Judd L. Teller*	282
Part of Our Time, by Murray Kempton	*Leslie A. Fiedler*	285
The Strange Career of Jim Crow, by C. Vann Woodward	*Henry F. Graff*	289

Managing Editor MARTIN GREENBERG

Editor ELLIOT E. COHEN

Business Manager FRANCES GREEN

Associate Editors MORRIS FREEDMAN, CLEMENT GREENBERG

Assistant Editor SHERRY ABEL

Advertising DOROTHY PUTNEY

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

ALAN M. STROOCK, *Chairman*

CHARLES D. BREITEL, ALBERT FURTH, MAURICE GLINERT, RALPH K. GUINZBERG, HENRY JAFFE, SYDNEY M. KAYE, EDWARD KUHN, JR., ANNE W. LANGMAN, LOUIS M. RABINOWITZ, MARIE L. ROTHSCHILD, DAVID SHER, JACK D. TARCHER, BEN TOUSTER, MILTON WEILL

COMMENTARY, incorporating *Contemporary Jewish Record:* Published monthly by the American Jewish Committee, 50¢ a copy; $6.00 a year; 2 years, $10.00; 3 years, $14.00. No additional charge for Canadian or foreign postage. Offices, 34 West 33rd Street, New York 1. Re-entered as second class matter October 30, 1945 at the post office in New York, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright 1955 by the American Jewish Committee. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved by the publisher in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, and all countries participating in the International Copyright Convention and the Pan-American Copyright Convention. Indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, Magazine Subject Index, and Public Affairs Information Service.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

Traditions of American Zionism *Judd L. Teller*

Zionism is not the same thing everywhere. Mr. Teller reminds us that the American variety, which has native roots in part, can be as different from the present Israeli kind as from the former Central European brand.

The Politics of Refugee Relief *James Rorty*

The unhappy history of the Refugee Relief Act, most recent chapter in the story of modern America's failure to make good its promise in the field of immigration. By the veteran journalist.

Art Worth Celebrating *William Schack*

Two Tercentenary exhibitions of art by American Jews (one of which included, moreover, examples of art by American Gentiles on Jewish themes) have raised anew the question of the existence, or sheer possibility, of a distinctively Jewish art anywhere in the Diaspora. A noted art critic addresses himself to the question directly in reviewing the exhibition held earlier this year at the YM and YWHA in New York, and the show organized by the American Jewish Tercentenary that traveled to various cities in the United States up until July.

Nazism on the Assembly Line *Solomon F. Bloom*

The hazards of attempting to solve problems of historical interpretation by collective methods are demonstrated in this review article of a recent Unesco compilation on Nazism.

Jewish-Gentile Segregation in the South *Harry L. Golden*

In addition to the Negro-White pattern of segregation in the South, there is another, far less noticeable one, involving Jews and middle-class Gentiles, that is basically "voluntary" in character. Some first-hand observations by the editor of the *Carolina Israelite*.

Reshuffling in the Middle East *George Lichtheim*

America's new dominant role in the Middle East has brought about certain shifts in the power alignments of the Islamic world. The author, a former Palestinian, shows us that things are not quite what they seem — or were.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

NEGOTIATING AN END TO THE COLD WAR

The Hazards

G. F. HUDSON

IN THE British House of Commons debate on the conference "at the summit" the left-wing Labor MP, Konni Zilliacus, declared that the meeting of the heads of governments had achieved an "armistice in the cold war." This is undoubtedly the way in which the Communists regard the conference. In a shooting war an armistice means a suspension of actual hostilities, which may be followed by a negotiated peace treaty, may be merely a temporary truce followed by a resumption of fighting, or may be indefinitely prolonged—as in Korea—without any agreed settlement of the issues about which the war has been fought. An armistice in the cold war implies a cessation for the time being of the open menaces, insults, and denunciations which the term connotes; it does not, on the other hand, involve any certainty, or even probability, of an agreed settlement of the basic conflicts between the free world and the states of the Sino-Soviet bloc. This situation was clearly recognized by Sir Anthony Eden in his television talk to the British people on his return from Geneva, when he declared: "I truly believe that this meeting at Geneva and the acceptance by the Russian leaders of my invitation here can open a new era. It has not done so yet, but it has made serious negotiations possible."

Such words of caution, however, have had little effect in the Western democracies as against the tidal wave of emotional confidence and optimism which has been flooding over the press and public opinion ever since the meeting of the Big Four. Although the conference reached no decision except to agree on a very vaguely worded agenda for the Foreign Ministers in October, it has brought about a universal sense of relaxation and *détente* just as if it had achieved a settlement of all the most important international issues at stake in the world today. To a great extent this result of the conference was an inevitable outcome of the Western governments' own insistence that the conference should be merely exploratory and not attempt to reach final decisions. With memories of Yalta and Potsdam in mind the Western statesmen were determined not to be placed

---

ON EVERY side in the free world, we see the evidences of a well-nigh overriding desire to have the cold war dissolved once and for all. The popular sentiment in the democracies for peace with the Sino-Soviet bloc found encouragement in the recent conference at Geneva of the heads of the governments of the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and France. Is such confidence justified, G. F. HUDSON asks. And will the Russian price for peace be the West's abandonment of its defensive alliances? Mr. Hudson, a frequent contributor, is a historian of international politics and an authority on the Far East.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this time in the position of having either to give way on vital points to Russian intransigence or allow the conference to break down; as it was, they were able at Geneva to conduct a debate on friendly terms without ever putting the new cordiality to the test of a crucial negotiation. But the price they have paid for this advantage is that their peoples have been profoundly misled by a superficial appearance of reconciliation and concord which has been achieved only because the real problems were shelved, and already the popular idea that the cold war is as good as over is making it more difficult for them to take up a firm position in the forthcoming negotiations of the Foreign Ministers or to maintain the "situation of strength" which has been built up with so much effort over the last few years.

It is not any concrete evidence of change in the fundamental policies of Communist Russia, but the highly publicized smiles and grins, the handshakes and back-slapping of the Soviet "new look," which have made so deep an impression on the public opinion, or rather the public sentiment, of Western countries. So far the only concessions of substance made from the Communist side have been agreement to the peace treaty with Austria, which Russia held up for years even after her own specific demands had been accepted, and the release by China as "pardoned criminals" of the eleven airmen who were detained and convicted contrary to international law and the terms of the Korean armistice, and were still held after the Secretary-General of the United Nations had humiliated the organization he represents by going to Peking to plead in vain on their behalf. On the most crucial issue of European politics, Russia has since the Geneva conference taken up officially a position which, unless it is drastically modified in negotiation, must render any agreement impossible except on a basis of outright appeasement by the West.

ALREADY at the conference itself the Russian representatives were able to get the unification of Germany linked with the general question of European security; they can thus make German unification conditional not only on the withdrawal of West Germany from NATO, and neutralization of a future united Germany, but also on the dissolution of NATO itself, which is the proclaimed purpose of the Russian proposals for a European system of collective security. This is bad enough, for it indicates that the unity of Germany is not merely to be made dependent on a bargain for safeguarding Russia's own security in Eastern Europe—on which the Western powers are more than willing to negotiate—but is to be used as a lever to disintegrate the only organization which provides the non-Communist European nations with security against the power of Russia and her satellites.

But the statements made by the Soviet leaders in Berlin on their way home from Geneva showed that the promise of German reunification, even on acceptance of Russia's terms for European security, is nothing but a snare, for although the agreed directive to the Foreign Ministers speaks of Germany being unified through "free elections," Khrushchev declared in Berlin that the two "sovereign states" now existing in Germany could not be "mechanically unified" and that the working people of the German Democratic Republic would never consent to "the abrogation of all their political and social gains, to the liquidation of all their democratic changes." Such statements make nonsense of all talk about free elections in Germany, for the only possible meaning of free elections is that the all-German parliament emerging from them shall be empowered to legislate as it thinks fit for the whole of Germany. But the "political gains" which Khrushchev will not allow the "working people" of East Germany to abandon consist of the dictatorship of the German Communist party, the Communist control of the Volkspolizei and its military units, and the Communist monopoly of education, culture, and propaganda.

The Soviet statements plainly mean that the unity of Germany is to be brought about, not by allowing the entire German people to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

choose democratically what kind of constitution and government it will have, but by amalgamating the two existing state systems in such a way that the Communist party and its officials will retain a special privileged position after unification, no matter how the popular voting may go. Such a Germany would certainly not be a democracy, for a democracy cannot be fused with a totalitarian state without losing its own essential character. Some political observers with backward glances into German history have been doubtful whether the institutions of political liberty have good chances of survival even in the area where they have been encouraged and protected by the Western postwar occupation; the prospect would be *nil* if the democracy of Bonn were to be merged with the undissolved dictatorship of the Pankow puppets.

IT WAS indeed another Khrushchev who was revealed in Berlin, no longer the political leader of a nation discussing its normal state interests with representatives of foreign powers, but the leader of international Communism taking a hand in the internal affairs of a country not his own in order to bolster up the power of his brother Communists, whom nobody supposes to be capable of winning a majority in free all-German elections. At Geneva there was a tacit agreement to avoid ideology and treat all matters of dispute as concerned with the purely external relations of states. Marshal Bulganin thus stated Soviet policy:

"We have always been in favor of peace among the peoples and of peaceful coexistence between all nations, irrespective of their internal systems, irrespective of whether the state concerned is a monarchy or a republic, whether it is capitalist or socialist, because the social and economic system existing in any country is the internal affair of its people."

In Berlin, however, Russia speaks with a different voice; the party regime set up in the former Soviet occupation zone is to be regarded not as the internal affair of the German people but as a Russian interest to be maintained whether a majority of the German people want it or not. At Geneva the Russian leaders professed complete indifference to the success or failure of Communist revolutions in other countries; in Berlin they made it clear that they are determined to preserve the power of the Communist party either as the government of a part of Germany or as an element built into the state structure of a united Germany.

This resolve in one way or another to thwart national freedom of choice in the second largest country of Europe must be viewed in relation to the Russian demand for the dissolution of NATO and the "withdrawal of foreign troops from the territories of European countries"—that is to say, the removal of all American forces and bases from the European side of the Atlantic. The basic power situation in Europe is after all a very simple one. The Soviet Union is overwhelmingly the most powerful single state in Europe, and it has in addition to its own resources the support of a group of satellite states whose governments were placed in power by Russian arms and are bound to Moscow by ties of common faith and political dependence. This bloc must dominate Europe decisively unless it is counterbalanced by a firm alliance of the great majority of the non-Communist European nations reinforced by the power of the United States, not merely as a potential supplement to, but as an integral component of, their system of common defense. Such an organization has in fact been created and has provided the nations of Western Europe with the degree of security they now possess. It is naturally the aim of the rulers of the Soviet Union to pull down the structure which alone stands between them and the absolute hegemony of Europe. If they could obtain a dissolution of NATO, if they could persuade the United States to withdraw its forces across the Atlantic, and if they could at the same time unify Germany on terms which would make it ungovernable without Communist participation, then Europe would be theirs and no European nation would be able to withstand their demands.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Soviet government apparently hopes to achieve these ends by high pressure salesmanship with an abundance of good-will gestures and honeyed peace talk suddenly turned on after a period when the peoples of the world have been scared out of their wits by the possibility of a war waged with hydrogen bombs. In an atmosphere of abruptly relaxed emotional tension they think perhaps that they can get by with proposals designed to divest the free world of its common defense. Marshal Bulganin in his press conference speech after the close of the conference said that "security" had been the most important question discussed at the conference. So from the Soviet point of view it was, but what the Marshal had in mind was not what Western peoples understand by security. Like so many other words, it means in the Marxist-Leninist language something quite different. Just as the German Democratic Republic is that part of Germany in which there is no democracy, so the Soviet proposal for replacing "military groupings of some European nations directed against others" with a collective security system of all European nations is merely a demand that the free peoples renounce the security they already have. All they are offered in return is that, if the West will definitely discard its alliances, Russia may be willing later on to permit the existence of a unified Germany, half-totalitarian and half-free.

A BARGAIN on the lines indicated is not one that can be seriously contemplated by responsible Western statesmen. The unity of Germany is desirable, but it would be bought at too high a price by any weakening, let alone the abolition, of NATO. The unity of Germany on the terms indicated by Bulganin and Khrushchev in Berlin is not even desirable. There have, nevertheless, been ominous signs that the Western powers may not be able to maintain a resolute solidarity on these matters. M. Faure caused consternation in the American and British delegations at Geneva by a sentence in which he virtually accepted the Soviet thesis by saying that the Western and Eastern security systems could be merged into one; he had not included this sentence in the draft he showed to his American and British partners, nor had he consulted his own foreign minister about it. No irreparable harm was done, but the incident seemed to reveal a French disposition to have it both ways: to stand in line with Britain and America and at the same time to make separate bids for Soviet favor by gestures of appeasement. In view of the national disunity on foreign policy which was manifest in the parliamentary struggle for ratification of the Paris agreements, it is difficult to feel confidence that France may not have some unpleasant surprises in store for her allies when the new Soviet diplomatic offensive reaches its full intensity.

Apart from possible wavering in the attitude of France, Britain and the United States are likely to be subjected in the coming months to two kinds of pressure which will make it very difficult for them to stand firm in negotiation on European questions. The first pressure will be from the German national desire for reunification at almost any price; the second from the new mood of trustfulness towards the Soviet Union in Western countries and the popular craving for an agreed settlement on almost any terms.

In Germany the Geneva conference has already weakened the position of Adenauer and his supporters, who have brought Germany into NATO and have refused to have anything to do with the Pieck republic. Although it is the Western powers who were pressing at Geneva for immediate German reunification and the Soviet leaders who were opposing it, it has become clearer than ever before that reunification can only come about at the will of Russia, and that Russia will only grant it on substantially her own terms. Up to now there has been a fairly widespread confidence in West Germany that the Western powers, having attained a position of strength, would somehow be able to persuade the Russians to abandon the Pieck republic and allow Germany to be united on the basis of free elections. But it has now been made plain that Russia has no intention of doing anything of the kind and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the Western powers are powerless to alter her purpose. It only remains, therefore, for the Germans to respond to the Russian bid for direct negotiations between Moscow and Bonn.

Adenauer himself may resist the Russian demands—which will certainly include a "reconciliation" between the West and East German states as equal participants in the making of a new Germany—but he is in danger of becoming increasingly isolated as West German opinion is tempted by specious and highly publicized Soviet promises into compromises with the East German Communist dictatorship. In any case there is only one Adenauer and he is an old man; there is nobody else in sight in German politics who can be expected to show a similar strength of character and European outlook in the years ahead. Political wisdom has not been a characteristic of the German people in modern times, and the bait of German national unity is likely to have a compulsive effect stronger than any other considerations. If German opinion thus gradually moves towards acceptance of Russian terms, the Western powers will be put in a dilemma: either they must go along with it or else they must risk alienating German opinion by insisting on conditions which will delay German reunification indefinitely.

THE pressure for making concessions to which the British and American governments are likely soon to be subjected on their own home fronts can be even more destructive of their will to resist Soviet demands. Public opinion in Western countries, deeply moved by fears of thermo-nuclear warfare and now convinced of Russian sincerity in seeking an end of the cold war, will not easily resign itself to the disappointment of the high hopes that have been raised by the Geneva conference; if the forthcoming negotiations on concrete issues run into new deadlocks, public opinion in the West will complain that unimportant points of detail are being allowed to stand in the way of the peaceful settlement which everybody wants; it will demand that talks must at all costs be prevented from breaking down, and it will expect the Western statesmen to come home with signed agreements. The Western peoples yearn for settlements, not merely an armistice in the cold war, and they can exert pressures which no democratic government can ignore, least of all an American president and his party in an election year. The Soviet government, on the other hand, is under no corresponding compulsion to seek a settlement at a price it is unwilling to pay, and consequently it has an immense advantage for bargaining in a so-called "atmosphere of good will." As a party dictatorship it does not depend on the votes of its people and it can manipulate public opinion to almost any extent required through its monopoly of education, propaganda, and news. If the negotiations of the Foreign Ministers are deadlocked, there can be no voice raised in any Communist country to suggest that Molotov is being too stubborn. The Soviet press, indeed, while acclaiming the new relations of friendship with the Western powers, has carefully explained that the Western willingness to confer has been due, not to their governments' desire for reconciliation, but to the popular agitation worked up by the Communist-sponsored "Partisans of Peace"; it follows that any setback to negotiations will simply mean that the imperialist warmongers have again got the upper hand.

When Eden said that the Geneva conference had "made serious negotiations possible," he was undoubtedly assuming—an assumption naturally made in the British Foreign Office and the State Department—that, an atmosphere of good will conducive to negotiation having been created, the Western representatives would come to the conference table to play their hands assured of the same sustained support from their peoples that they have had for resisting the blockade of Berlin or building NATO. Unfortunately for this assumption, there are signs that the atmosphere of good will is already weakening the strength of purpose that they must have behind them if they are to succeed in "serious negotiation." It is automatically creating a situation in which the Soviet leaders are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

likely to get a great deal of what they want without having to pay any price for it at all.

The state of mind known as "appeasement" is not really an exceptional phenomenon for which some political clique can be held responsible; it is the normal attitude of a liberal democracy when confronted with a totalitarian power. The initial impulse is always to avoid conflict, to make concessions, to withdraw from exposed positions, to give the disturber of the peace the benefit of every doubt and to lean over backward in consideration of his point of view. This mood prevails as long as the totalitarian leadership does not go beyond a certain point in truculence or open aggression; when it does and the democracy becomes convinced that further appeasement can only lead to disaster, there is a transition to resistance and organized defense. Unfortunately the change of attitude tends to come too late to retrieve the situation without either a war or an extreme tension verging on war.

Twice in the last two decades has democratic appeasement been turned to resistance, and in each case aggressive blackmail and *coups de force* had won immense successes before the stand was made. Hitler, exploiting British appeasement, had an uninterrupted run of success until his seizure of Prague in March 1939, and then the momentum of the Nazi expansion was such that it could not be stopped without a world war. Stalin, exploiting American appeasement, made vast gains for the Soviet Union and for Communism at the end of the war, but he also in the end overplayed his hand and produced a recoil of American policy with the Truman Doctrine similar to the recoil of British policy against Hitler in the spring of 1939. This time, however, the Western stand did not produce a shooting war; the blockade of Berlin, which was the great trial of strength, never developed into armed hostilities. In the Far East, where the Truman Doctrine was not applied until 1950, the attempt to curb Communist expansion did produce a shooting war, but it was kept limited to Korea and ended in a draw. Both in Europe and the Far East the Western powers, in spite of the furious denunciations of such action by Communists, Peace Partisans, and Nehru and his followers, organized systems of common defense marking strategic boundaries not to be crossed without war, and Communist expansion (except in Indo-China) was brought to a halt. So the second cycle of Western appeasement and resistance reached a situation of stalemate, with the high political tension which has come to be known as the "cold war," but without any prospect for the Sino-Soviet bloc to advance further except by risking a general war in which America would have a superiority in atomic weapons. Meanwhile Russia has been suffering economically from the bar on trade in strategic materials, and politically from the counter-offensive of radio broadcasting from the West.

WHAT was there to do from a Communist point of view but to go back to the tactics and slogans of 1945 and try to recreate in America the mood of trustfulness and appeasement from which Russia had drawn such rich dividends before the icy blasts of the cold war had chilled the warm and gullible generosity of Rooseveltian idealism? It must have been clear to Stalin's successors that insults and threats were no longer getting them anywhere; the grim faces of steel-hardened cadres and rock-ribbed Stalinists were opening no doors, but merely rallying the peoples and governments of the West in a resolve to close their ranks, increase their armaments, and tighten their alliances. It could not do any harm to try the effect of smiling instead. So we are to begin all over again and wipe out the memory of the past; if anything went wrong with Soviet-American relations on the Soviet side—and it may be difficult to persuade Americans that the fault was entirely on *their* side—then it was all due to Stalin, or better still, to Beria, and cannot be attributed to Krushchev and Bulganin, who are now ready to smile until their jaws ache.

But what in reality has changed in Russia? There has been a slight relaxation of the extreme rigors of the regime; the powers of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

secret police have been somewhat restricted; the mortality in the forced-labor camps is not what it was. But the basic fact of Communist party dictatorship and its universal thought-control remains unaltered, and if Stalin himself is dead, the men now in power are those whom he selected and promoted and who were the accomplices of his tyranny. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine, with its theme of ultimately irreconcilable conflict between two worlds, remains the faith of Russia, of Communist China, and of Communist parties throughout the world. As recently as May of this year, Marshal Biryuzov wrote in the *Young Communist*—and a special pamphlet developing the same argument was being circulated for the instruction of junior army officers:

"Our support for the Peace Partisans does not mean that we are against all war. That would be a bourgeois pacifist attitude. We are against imperialist war, since that is counter-revolutionary war. But we are in favor of a liberating, anti-imperialist, revolutionary war. . . ."

The Western liberal may distinguish between wars as defensive or aggressive and hope for an international order which would outlaw aggression as such, by whomsoever it was committed. But for Communists the only two kinds of war are those mentioned by Marshal Biryusov in the passage quoted above, and as long as such is the teaching which the Soviet Union gives to its younger generation, there can be no sense in pretending that we have a common conception of peaceful coexistence. By all means let us have whatever friendly contacts we can with the lands of Communism, but let us get it clear in our own minds that the defensive alliances of the nations of the free world are not negotiable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD

Rosh Hashanah's Meanings

ERNST SIMON

THE calendar, with its rhythmic division of the year, its beginning and its end, its workdays, rest days and holidays, provides a characteristic expression of the spirit of different religions, cultures, and peoples. This is especially true of that moment or event which is taken as the starting point from which time is reckoned. For Christianity, Jesus, as the son of God, had only to be born to open a new era in world history; Islam, however, whose prophet claimed no divinity for himself, begins its reckoning, quite consistently, not with Mohammed's birth but with his first great act as the founder of a religion, the flight from Mecca to Medina, the "hegira" of 622.

Secular movements too, like the French Revolution and Italian Fascism, have attempted—mostly without success—to introduce new calendars, and thus to symbolize their epochal importance. With us also one occasionally sees a date given as "In the year such-and-such since the foundation of the Jewish state," but the idea does not seem to have caught on. Jews, even those of Israel, still reckon time from the creation of the world; their New Year is its birthday.

This was not always wholly undisputed. The Mishnah tract "Rosh Hashanah" begins as follows: "There are four beginnings of the year: the first of Nisan is Rosh Hashanah for the kings [i.e., their reigns] and for holidays. The first of Elul is Rosh Hashanah for the tithe of cattle. . . . The first of Tishri is Rosh Hashanah for the year and for the fallow year and the jubilee year, for planting and for vegetables. The first of Shebat is Rosh Hashanah for trees, according to the school of Shammai; but the school of Hillel says the fifteenth."

The Jewish calendar still retains certain remnants of this original division into four: Nisan, not Tishri, is the first month, and we celebrate the "New Year's festival of the trees" on the fifteenth of Shebat. None of these survivals has, however, acquired even in the slightest degree the religious significance of "Rosh Hashanah," even though "Rosh Hashanah" doesn't appear in the Torah, as we know, as a specially significant day but only as the day of the shofar-blowing and of the holy gathering that precedes Yom Kippur by ten days.

SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH has characterized the *luach*, the Jewish calendar, as our catechism, and Bialik has taught us to look for ultimate metaphysical positions in Talmudic interpretations. Perhaps it would not be too bold, therefore, to extend a similar interpretation to the foregoing Mishnah. From this point of view the conflict between the four beginnings of the year would represent a decision worked out by the Jewish folk spirit. The New Year on the first of Nisan would represent the political principle, that on the first of Elul the religious one, and that on the fifteenth of Shebat the purely natural one. But the first of Tishri, our Rosh Hashanah, simply opens the year,

---

ERNST SIMON elucidates for us here the meanings of Rosh Hashanah. An earlier commentary of his, on the book of Jonah with special reference to Yom Kippur, appeared in our September 1953 number. Dr. Simon, an outstanding contemporary thinker on Judaism, is professor of pedagogy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which he also helps administer. Born in Berlin in 1899 and educated at Heidelberg, he was, with Martin Buber, co-editor of *Der Jude*, and taught at Franz Rosenzweig's Freies Jüdische Lehrhaus in Frankfort. In 1928 he went to Palestine, where he has lived ever since. This essay was translated from the German by Irving Pfefferblit.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

although, of course, the date has connections with the rhythm of nature, and its religious-legal regulation. It is—in the language of the *machzor,* the holiday prayer book, *Yom Harat Olam*—the birthday of the world. And as such, it conquered its political, ritual, and purely natural rivals. The outcome of this rivalry bears a universalistic character: it is an acknowledgment of humanity and its unity.

This characteristic of the Jewish New Year is also expressed in the excerpts from the Torah and the Prophets that we read by rabbinical prescription on Rosh Hashanah. The first day shows us a very old couple, Sarah and Abraham, who now at last have received their long prayed-for son: Isaac. But Sarah is so jealous of Ishmael, Abraham's son by the Egyptian maid Hagar—whose name points etymologically to *hagira,* hegira, to wandering and flight—that she forces Abraham to drive them forth, and even God gives his consent. But now the suffering and distress of the fleeing mother are depicted, as her son is threatened with death by thirst in the desert. She goes a bowshot's length away from him because she cannot bear to watch him die. But an angel of God comforts her from heaven, and God opens her eyes and shows her a nearby well, "for God heard the voice of the lad wherever he was" (Gen. 21). So God heard the voice of a suffering child then, and leaned down to the heart of a tortured mother, even though she was "only" a fugitive Egyptian.

The Prophetic text for the same day, the first chapter of the First Book of Samuel, takes up the same purely human motif of the primal relationship between parents and children, and carries it further. Elkanah has two wives, the childless Hannah, and Peninnah, the "pearl," the fruitful one. It is Hannah whom he loves more, but she endures one humiliation after another from her fortunate rival, as Hagar, the maid, did from Sarah, the "princess." But whereas in the Torah passage, despite all the sympathy shown to Hagar, the final victory goes to Sarah, in the Prophetic text the situation is reversed. We hear no more of Peninnah, but Hannah, whose name is related to *chen,* mercy, finally wins divine mercy by her mute prayer in which "only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard," and which laid the religious-legal foundation for the softly spoken *Shmóna Esrai,* the recital of the Eighteen Benedictions.

However, Eli, the priest, who is the official superintendent of the ritual and the highest representative of "religion," misinterprets Hannah's mute prayer as the behavior of a drunkard, and must learn the truth of her religious intoxication from her. The simple woman conquers the priest's skepticism. . . . And so Judaism begins every new year with this victory of the mother over the institution and its soul-deaf representatives. Hagar the Egyptian, the mother of Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs, and Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, join hands as sisters in maternal suffering and maternal consolation.

THE second day of the holiday brings a further heightening of the same motif. Abraham must lose Isaac, Isaac, the one of his two sons whom he loves wholly. After the suffering of mothers, passive feminine suffering, comes active masculine suffering; he must inflict it on himself. The paradox of his loyal readiness to sacrifice his son, understandable only as mystery, is rewarded; as God's angel had reserved a well for Ishmael, so God has reserved something better for Isaac: a sacrificial lamb instead of his own sacrifice. The two half-brothers and foes run the same danger and are saved in similar ways; they too have become brothers, as Hagar and Hannah have become sisters.

But the Prophetic text from the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah lifts one factor in this primally human motif of the day of Rosh Hashanah—and that perhaps the central one—out of the realm of the personal, although it does not destroy its personal meaning. That is the factor of the mother. Rachel weeps for her children and refuses to be comforted, *"ki enennu."* The two Hebrew words can be translated in different ways, and next to the customary translation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—"because they are not"—one might set the bolder one—"as if they were not." This becomes especially clear when one thinks of the only other Biblical parallel in which a man apparently robbed of his child refuses to be comforted: that of Jacob mourning for Joseph (Gen. 37:35). But Joseph is alive, and so are the sons of Rachel, who for Jeremiah's prophetic consciousness was at once mother and ancestress. Thus her children become the temporally lost and eternally safe tribes of Israel.

But the father motif, too, is capable of a further extension. We learn of it in a prayer that belongs exclusively to the "ten days of returning" from the first to the tenth of Tishri, and in which we call God both "our Father" and "our King."

"Avinu, Malkenu," it is He Who, on the birthday of His world, comforts His children and makes them brothers and sisters, all the loving fathers and mothers and their threatened and rescued children. As it always does, here, too, the thing most individual depends on the universal: the world is reborn in the individual human being.

Today the "Days of Awe" are an embarrassment for most of us because we can give them neither a national, a ritual, nor a purely natural meaning. The return they require of us leaves the birthdays of the kings, of the tithes, and of the trees their place and their rights, but it claims the central place for that which Rosh Hashanah always was and always will be—the birthday of the world.

INSCRIPTION ON THE FLYLEAF OF A BIBLE

(For My Daughter)

DANNIE ABSE

I GIVE you this Bible and more to take.
Love is the work the hands of man can make.
So read what this, our fabled history teaches
and where, the fire-work, Imagination reaches
to dignify and sanctify.

So on the interior circuits do not miss
the vivid allegories you'll find in this.
The Pentateuch, Kings, Prophets—all will yield
signposts to guide you through the darkened field,
truths of piety and poetry.

Like Moses, avoid the gold and choose the coal
and see the pattern in the whole.
With the abandoned always side
and the loud and lonely crowd deride
who vilify and simplify.

Find valuable Job's elegance of distress,
David's winging gifts to praise. Such eloquence can bless
even wild soldiers on the barricade,
for the great visions are past but do not fade
and fortify and mollify.

DANNIE ABSE's third volume of poetry is due to appear next spring, under the imprint of Hutchinson (England), and that house will also put out his second novel sometime next year. A section from his first novel, *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve* (reviewed in our issue of last April) appeared in these pages in October of 1953. Dr. Abse, who was born in South Wales in 1928, now lives in London. He is a graduate of the Westminster Hospital Medical School of that city.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW MEXICO'S FADING COLOR LINE

Albuquerque Shows the Way

ALBERT ROSENFELD

EARLY last June I was having lunch in one of the better restaurants on Albuquerque's Central Avenue with three University of New Mexico students, all of them colored. One was from New Jersey, another from Cuba, the third from Ethiopia. The Jerseyite was passing around a clipping from the New York *Times* he had just received from a friend back home. The brief article, discussing discrimination in the Southwest, was datelined Los Angeles, May 28, 1955. "Discrimination against Negroes," read a sentence underlined in ink, "is so prevalent that, according to a correspondent, it is as difficult to get a Negro a meal in Albuquerque, of 100,000 population, as it is in Ruidoso, a small mountain resort."

Miguel Marrero, the Cuban student, read the clipping while the blond waitress served us coffee. Mike grinned his big-toothed grin and remarked, "This fellow obviously hasn't heard about our anti-discrimination ordinance. He's at least three years out of date." Mike might have added that the fellow was also at least three years out of date on his population figures, since Albuquerque had long since passed the 150,000 mark.

Albuquerque, perhaps the fastest growing city in all the booming West, is a crossroads town, located on that sun-seared stretch of New Mexico mesa where Route 66—whose perennial popularity as an East-West highroad Bing Crosby used to serenade on the nation's jukeboxes—meets the Pan-American Highway, U.S. 85, connecting the Mexican border with the Canadian. Albuquerque is also a cultural crossroads where, since Territorial days, Indian Americans, Spanish Americans, and Anglo-Americans have enjoyed one another's company in comparative harmony. In the period between the Great Depression and the years immediately following World War II, heavy immigration made Albuquerque another kind of crossroads, where West met—and clashed with—South.

The Western tradition has always held that "a man's a man." Southern dogma, as everyone knows, insists on the superiority of some breeds of men over others. When the South challenged the West in Albuquerque, the City Commission replied by passing a penalty-laden anti-discrimination ordinance that is perhaps unique in America's history.* The ordinance got its final approval on Lincoln's Birthday, 1952, on the eve of Brotherhood Week. Its passage, unfortunately, was not as well publicized as another incident that occurred the same week in San Francisco, where a young man named Sing Sheng was, by majority vote of his prospective neighbors, denied admittance to a suburban residential area.

During the public discussion of the controversial measure before the City Commission, an Albuquerque old-timer got up to say his piece. First he expressed sympathy with the aims of the proposed ordinance.

THIS is the tale of a resounding triumph over racial discrimination that will set an example, one hopes, for similar campaigns elsewhere. ALBERT ROSENFELD, who contributed "In Santa Fe, the City Different" to the May 1954 issue of this magazine, hails from Philadelphia and is now settled in Santa Fe, where he is correspondent for *Time* and *Life*. He has appeared in *Collier's, Reader's Digest, Harper's,* and many other periodicals.

*The Congress of the United States passed a Civil Rights Bill in 1875 calling for "not only equal but identical accommodations in all public places for Negroes and Caucasians." But this law was largely ignored, and the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1883.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We never used to have this kind of trouble in Albuquerque. It's all happened within the past few years." Regretfully he added: "It's no use, though. You just can't legislate against social prejudice." Many in the audience nodded their amens.

But the old gentleman turned out to be wrong.

When a bill was introduced during the 1955 session of the state legislature proposing a statewide anti-discrimination law, a representative from Bernalillo County replied to its critics: "Three years ago I, too, would have said that such a law could not work. But since then I have *seen* it work, admirably—in the city of Albuquerque."

Not that the old gentleman can be blamed for his skepticism. Even some of the ordinance's best friends could hardly believe it had worked so successfully and painlessly. A caravan of Negro delegates from Phoenix, en route to a convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Oklahoma City, decided on a test as they passed through Albuquerque. The caravan started on the west end of Route 66, which runs through the heart of town. Someone in each car stopped at every café and bar along the road. They had to admit to Hobart LaGrone of Albuquerque, when they saw him at the convention, that in no place were they refused service. In fact, in no place was there the slightest indication that people were anything but quite pleased to serve them!

PART of New Mexico, notably those counties that adjoin the Texas border, had for a long time shared and practiced the regular Southern prejudices. Towns like Clovis, Portales, Roswell, Carlsbad, Artesia, and Hobbs segregated their Negroes in the schools and in housing areas, and openly discriminated against them in public places. But the East Side of New Mexico was, after all, "Little Texas," and the rest of the state was not too disturbed about its folkways. Not, at least, until the *tejanos** began creeping northward and westward, infecting even Albuquerque, the liberal, metropolitan heart of New Mexico. Then old hands began to grow alarmed. Next it would be Santa Fe and Taos.

It all began in the 1930's. During Governor Clyde Tingley's administration, a State Tourist Bureau was created. In response to its blandishments, thousands of migrants from Texas, Oklahoma, and the Deep South —who had been hard hit by the depression and were looking, anyway, for a new, hospitable frontier—headed for New Mexico. The line on the immigration graph rose steeply with the years; in the immediate postwar period—which saw Albuquerque quintuple its population—the line spiraled right off the graph paper.

"There was a time in Albuquerque," says Hobart LaGrone, a mail-carrier who heads the local NAACP, "when your color didn't matter when you went into a public place. Then things began to tighten up a bit as Southern customers in bars and cafés began complaining about having to eat and drink with Negroes. They would threaten not to come back, and the proprietors were afraid of losing business. If you came in with some white friends, the proprietor usually wouldn't refuse you service—but he would watch you uneasily all the time you were there, and the waitress would serve you as fast as she could. If you came back to the same place alone, there would be some pretext for not serving you. Or they would treat you with deliberate discourtesy and charge absurd prices.

"This began happening in more and more places. Even the movie theaters began steering their colored patrons to segregated sections of the balcony. A Marian Anderson could still get a room at the Alvarado and

*A *tejano*, literally, is a Texan. The word began to carry distasteful overtones way back during the War Between the States when a contingent of hell-raising Texans invaded New Mexico with the Confederate forces (at a time when Ash Upson, editor of the Albuquerque *Review*, was writing violent anti-slavery editorials). Today the term *tejano* refers to any prejudiced person—usually a Southerner, although a man from Connecticut or the Dakotas may rate the epithet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a Hazel Scott could stay at the Hilton, but an ordinary colored tourist had to find some all-Negro accommodations."

Most white Albuquerqueans were hardly aware of the change. But the situation was finally thrust upon their attention by the student body at the University of New Mexico. Once the fact of increasing discrimination was publicized, the students did not have far to look for allies. Large numbers of Albuquerque's newcomers, from the East, Midwest, and Far West, preferred the old Western ways. Sandía Base and Kirtland Field, huge secret atomic and jet installations, had brought in thousands of well-educated people who had no stomach for Jim Crow. And, most encouraging of all, it turned out that a number of Southerners had left home precisely to get away from that South which now pursued them.

In 1949, two of the most popular students at the university were Negroes—George Long, who had been elected first president of the new Mesa Vista dormitory, and Herb Wright, who headed the campus chapter of NAACP. Long and Wright were repeatedly denied service at restaurants and bars, even when they were in the company of their white friends. The latter began to write angry letters to the editor of the campus newspaper, the *Lobo*. The *Lobo's* editors began listing places which discriminated against Negroes, and the student senate began boycotting them.

When Oklahoma Joe's, a popular student hangout, refused service to a Negro, the word passed quickly around the campus, and Joe, frozen out, quickly capitulated. When the Walgreen Drug Store in town wouldn't serve Negroes at the fountain, the president of the student senate, Al Utton (now a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford), declared Walgreen's off limits. Bars and cafés all over town were given this treatment. The student trade is no inconsiderable factor in Albuquerque's economy and some places quit discriminating in deference to student wishes. But most preferred to keep their Southern clientele. Some proprietors were, of course, Southerners themselves. One such proprietor of a café near the campus ordered Shirley Williams, a Negro co-ed who had come in innocently to have lunch with her white roommate, to get out. When Manuel Talley, a visiting investigator from the Committee on Racial Equality, went in to talk to this same proprietor, he was cracked over the head with a ketchup bottle.

With the increasing student agitation, the local NAACP chapter went into action. It enlisted the aid of the Ministerial Alliance, labor organizations, the LULACS (League of Latin-American Citizens), the American GI Forum, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and other sympathetic groups, then proposed that the City Commission consider the passage of an anti-discrimination ordinance.

Julius Golden, now with Associated Press but then a student reporter for the *Lobo*, took a sampling of opinion among restaurant owners. Some were frankly and ferociously against the idea of such an ordinance. "There ought to be an ordinance," one proprietor suggested, "to keep the niggers in their place. I hate 'em." But another expressed what most seemed to be thinking: "I hate to say no to a colored man. But most of us aren't heroes or reformers. We don't want to lose our Southern trade. Frankly, I'd be all in favor of an anti-discrimination ordinance. If it was against the law for me to refuse service to Negroes, then my other customers would realize I had no choice. And if *nobody* discriminated, they'd pretty soon get used to the idea of having Negroes around. But it's going to take a law to do it."

By the fall of 1950 the City Commission was sufficiently impressed by the arguments offered in favor of legislating against discrimination to appoint a committee to look into the matter. Albuquerque was a vital defense area, the ordinance's proponents argued, and it, of all places, should be a working model of democracy. Was it not of primary importance, they asked, to wipe out any practice that the nation's enemies might use to stir up group tensions? The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

committee was given a twofold task: to decide whether or not discrimination was really widespread in Albuquerque; and, if so, to recommend what, if anything, the City Commission might do about it. Head of the committee was Dr. Sherman Smith, director of student affairs at the university. On it was a prominent Negro, a Spanish Presbyterian minister, a Southern Baptist minister, a businessman from Oklahoma, a sociologist, a housewife, and the president of the local plumber's union.

The committee moved cautiously. After a number of interviews with individuals and heads of organizations, they decided there was no real discrimination against Spanish Americans in Albuquerque. They talked to members of various Indian-affairs associations and to representatives of Navaho and Pueblo tribes, and concluded that Indians ran into trouble only in securing adequate housing; and this discrimination was economic rather than racial. Albuquerque citizens of Oriental ancestry testified they had run into no difficulties.

It was hardly necessary to interview any Jews. Everyone agreed there was no local Jewish problem. In the earliest days Jews had made the three-month journey by wagon train from St. Louis through Apache and Comanche territory. They were among the town's oldest families, and there was hardly an organization in Albuquerque, from Rotary to the country club, in which Jews were not prominent. Interreligious relations had always been comfortable, sometimes to the point of jocularity.

But the committee did find, from the repeated testimony of a parade of Negro witnesses, that there was indeed discrimination against Negroes all over town—not in *every* bar, restaurant, hotel, motel, barber shop, beauty parlor, public hall, and swimming pool in the city, but in most of them.

In *An American Dilemma,* his monumental study of the American Negro, Gunnar Myrdal repeatedly stressed that even the best-educated white people were woefully ill informed, as a rule, about Negro conditions in their own communities. The Albuquerque housewife on the committee kept expressing astonishment and dismay at the point to which social relations in her native city had deteriorated. ". . . a great majority of white people in America would be prepared to give the Negro a substantially better deal if they knew the facts," said Myrdal. This proved to be the case in Albuquerque.

The housewife's expression of dismay at local conditions was not the only cause for surprise during the course of the committee's meetings and hearings. It had been generally assumed, for example, that at least two Southern-minded members of the committee would be in favor of continued discrimination. Yet at one point the former Oklahoman rose to say, "In all honesty, I must admit that I have bias in my heart. I was raised in the midst of it. But I don't want my children to grow up with it. That's one reason we moved to New Mexico. And although I can't seem to get rid of my bias, that is no reason to be proud of it. I confess I am ashamed of it." (As the Elder Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov* told the lady who was grieved because she seemed incapable of loving anyone: "It is enough that you are distressed by it.")

Meanwhile summer had come, and the committee suspended operations. When it resumed them in the fall, with no word about its findings, NAACP's LaGrone began to grow restive. He feared the committee's Southern members might be deliberately stalling in order to postpone action indefinitely. (The *Lobo* later editorialized sarcastically: "It took eight persons a year to discover that racial discrimination exists in Albuquerque.") At this timely moment an incident occurred which gave LaGrone the perfect opportunity to bring the matter to a head. A colored exchange student from Ceylon, on his way to Santa Clara College in California, was refused service at the Liberty Café. When he arrived at his home campus, he reported the indignity to the dean, who wrote to the Albuquerque City Commission, which issued a formal apology

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the student. LaGrone wrote letters to the local newspapers and reminded the commissioners that this sort of international incident was possible—and would continue to be possible—only because it was common practice to discriminate against Albuquerque's own Negroes.

The committee called a final meeting at which it was decided unanimously to recommend the passage of an anti-discrimination ordinance. Although the ordinance recommended by the committee contained no penalties other than civil (e.g., the revocation of a license to operate), the ordinance drawn up by the NAACP's attorney had teeth in it: a fine of $100 to $300, from 30 to 90 days in jail, the loss of operating license in case of a second violation within a year. Defined as public places in the ordinance were hotels, restaurants, bars, ice cream parlors, dispensaries, clinics, hospitals, bathhouses, theaters, concert halls, skating rinks, golf courses, swimming pools, pool parlors, public conveyances, and public halls and elevators. Not included, on purpose, to reduce anticipated opposition, were barber shops and beauty parlors. Also omitted were clubs or places "distinctly private" in nature. The ordinance was patterned on a similar one drawn up for Madison, Wisconsin. Madison didn't accept it. Albuquerque did.

By this time many influential sections of the town's population had gone on record as favoring the ordinance: Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups; civic clubs, labor unions, and veterans' organizations; newspapers and radio stations. People pushing the ordinance were, on the whole, such a solid, conservative lot that no one could label the move "Red-sponsored" without being laughed at. NAACP's good-humored but stubbornly serious LaGrone—who, although only a postman, is a graduate of Fisk University and a man of wide intellectual interests—pleaded eloquently before the Commission: "The nearly two billion colored peoples of the world watch to see how democracy's champion will meet the challenge posed by this test. Stubborn postponement of the solution of this problem makes the nation's position as the standard-bearer of freedom increasingly untenable."

Albuquerque law requires three consecutive weekly readings of an ordinance before passage, except in case of emergency. On the first reading of the anti-discrimination ordinance before the City Commission, there was no vocal opposition. "This strikes deeply into our whole social set-up," Commissioner Don Wilson commented, "but it is my feeling that if the Constitution of the United States means what it says, I think passage of this measure will clear the air. But I do believe it should have three readings and not be passed as an emergency."

The only hostile voice at the second reading was a representative of the barbers' union. But since barber shops had been omitted from the ordinance, he had to admit that his protest was irrelevant.

By the third and final reading, however, the opposition had begun to realize that the improbable was about to happen. They quickly organized, set up a public howl, and turned out in impressive numbers for the meeting. The howl they set up spread some alarm among the bill's friends. They, too, showed up in force. A thousand people must have squeezed into the restricted City Hall meeting space that evening.

It was a session to delight the most jaded collector of *non sequiturs*. "I'm not prejudiced against Negroes," said one indignant lady. "I'm simply prejudiced in favor of white people. What's wrong with that?"

Several people protested the high penalties for violation of the ordinance—among them H. Duncan Simmons, executive secretary of the Bernalillo County Retail Liquor Dealers Association, who termed the measure "class legislation" against "an industry that is already more burdened with regulations than any other."

"The Negroes are much happier keeping with their own kind," one helpful fellow assured the Commission. "Why force them to mix?"

There were dire prophecies of impending riots and bloodshed if "the races are forced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to mix." There were some in the crowd who announced that they were sincere, dedicated Christians, men of great integrity and morality, saturated with the principles of Americanism; and that, therefore, they reserved the right not to serve, or eat with, Negroes.

Among the self-styled good Christians present was a young Southerner named Bill Upchurch, the son of a local restaurant owner, who turned out to be the leading spokesman for the opposition. He called the proposed ordinance "more of this old socialistic stuff being forced on us by Truman and his gang. It's a question of whether or not we'll have private ownership." He brushed off a question from the Reverend Mr. C. N. Austin, Jr., pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who wanted to know if Upchurch thought there would be segregation in heaven, and promised he would circulate petitions to defeat "this insidious measure."

Near the end of the meeting, one restaurant man demanded to know, "Doesn't the Constitution give *us* equal rights, too?" Commissioner Don Wilson replied, "If everybody's going to serve our people regardless of race or creed, then all are being treated equally."

In the end the City Commission passed the ordinance unanimously. The man who made the announcement—to the accompaniment of applause and cheers—was Chairman Clyde Tingley, the same man who, as governor, had set up the State Tourist Bureau whose siren song brought the first mass invasion of *tejanos* to Albuquerque.

UPCHURCH and his followers were not going to take this lying down. Almost immediately petitions started circulating calling for a city-wide referendum on the controversial ordinance. Upchurch lost no time calling a meeting of his strategy committee at the Chamber of Commerce offices. Since there was no attempt at secrecy, a number of uninvited hecklers attended. One of them who spoke up was silenced by Upchurch with: "I'm afraid I don't want to hear any more from you. This is just a Negro-white fraternization law."

At one point, while Upchurch was discoursing on "natural laws," a man who identified himself merely as a Civil Service employee interrupted to tell about a case during the war where a group of Negro soldiers en route to a fighting front had been denied service. "Are you trying to infer that I condone such a thing?" shouted Upchurch. "Are you trying to insult me?" "You can take it as an insult if you like. If the shoe fits, wear it." There were shouts of "government ward" and less polite epithets, and the speaker finally gave up, while Upchurch went on philosophizing: "Nothing ever is equal to anything else. Jesus Christ did not come to earth to teach equality. He came to teach brotherhood. Brothers are not always equal. Niggers as a whole are just not as wealthy as white people, and you will find that the economic wealth of a country controls it."

The milder Roland Carroll, a construction company official, advised: "Let's try to keep race discussions out of it. Let's stress the belief that our rights to conduct our businesses as we see fit have been denied us." In agreement was a lady acting as the group's treasurer. "Our freedom's all gone when four men can tell us who can come into our place of business," she said. "I never have turned anyone away from my café. But this makes me mad. I have nothing against anyone, no matter what their color. What I am arguing is that our rights have been denied us."

At this, the Reverend Mr. Ira J. Bailes, pastor of the Monte Vista Christian Church, asked permission to speak. "I own a car," he said quietly. "But I cannot drive it in such a way as to endanger other people without getting into serious trouble. Likewise, if you are looking to the public to support your business, your private wishes must be placed second to the public's wishes." The pastor said a few more words about how the deliberate stirring up of racial hatred was dividing the country at a time when we needed to face our common enemies as a united nation.

After the opponents of the referendum

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

movement had had their say and left, Upchurch's comment, reported by the Albuquerque *Tribune*, was: "Now that the Reds have gone, we can get down to business."

The referendum movement got plenty of publicity. No one who read the newspapers or listened to the radio could complain that news of it was suppressed. Station KOAT decided to devote one of its daily "Let the People Speak" programs to the subject, which proved so popular that it dominated the program for many days. During the unrehearsed, informal interviews, Hobart LaGrone was astonished and gratified to hear so many soft-drawling Southern voices speak in favor of the ordinance.

After a few weeks, interest began petering out and the petition circulators had to admit failure. They needed 15,000 signatures, but had secured barely 1,800. And among them were signatures of people like Dr. Sherman Smith, head of the committee which had originally recommended the ordinance; he, like other people, signed the petitions in the serene confidence that a popular vote would endorse the ordinance overwhelmingly.

Thus the anti-discrimination ordinance became law in Albuquerque. It was true, as the *Lobo* pointed out editorially, that restaurant owners could still find pretexts for refusing service to a Negro on the ground that "the man was not dressed neatly enough, or he was acting obnoxious, or most anything that couldn't be proved one way or another."

The local NAACP chapter was prepared to make a test case of the first incident in which a Negro complained of being refused service. But there were no complaints—because there were no refusals. Only one incident was reported to NAACP, and only at second hand. Two colored sailors passing through town, with some time to kill between buses, went across the street to get a beer. The bartender refused to serve them. When they returned to the bus station, a colored porter told them about the anti-discrimination ordinance. So the sailors went back to the bar, this time accompanied by an Albuquerque city policeman. They drank their beer in peace, and went on their way.

Aside from this single—perhaps apocryphal—incident (a far cry indeed from the riots which had been prophesied), there have been only a few minor misunderstandings, all of them settled amicably by a few words. Thus, without the need of a test case, Negroes now circulate freely and confidently once more in the city of Albuquerque—a city of the Old West, where a man is still a man.* Recently the Flanagan Construction Company advertised a new housing project in the Albuquerque *Journal*. Its headline read: NO RACE SEGREGATION.

But by now there was word of an integrated housing project even in Clovis, New Mexico, in the heart of *tejano* country. As further evidence of the state's fading color line, a few communities in "Little Texas" had voluntarily begun desegregating their schools. Irvin P. Murphy, a forward-looking school superintendent now with the State Department of Education, had started the trend in Carlsbad. Other towns, like Artesia and Roswell, soon followed suit. When the Supreme Court issued its decision on segregation, the entire East Side submitted to the inevitable. Hobbs, a booming oil town only four miles from the Texas border, decided to go along quietly and permit Negro students to register at white schools the following semester (September 1954). There were no overt indications of trouble until the summer vacation was almost over. Then the Reverend Mr. Bill T. Carter, pastor of the Rock Chapel Baptist Church, spoke up.

A big, hearty, self-educated man, Carter had once served time on a Texas chain gang; later he became an oilfield worker who—according to his own testimony—drank, gambled, and caroused mightily until the death of one of his children brought on an apocalyptic conversion.

---

*Since this article was written, the NAACP has received a complaint that many Albuquerque motels are still discriminating against Negro tourists; and it may, after all, be necessary to bring a test case to court.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As fall registration time approached, Carter began referring to himself as moderator of a segregation committee. He sought an injunction to prevent the Hobbs school board from ending segregation without awaiting further word from the Supreme Court. Carter freely predicted there would be bloody riots when Negro children tried to go to white schools, and added that, in such case, he would have to step down as head of the group. "I'm afraid there is no chance for a peaceful settlement of the problem," he said sadly.

A deputy sheriff and S. H. Evans, the local NAACP head, told reporters they had no reason to expect trouble over desegregation. But the Reverend Mr. Carter insisted: "This is not just a Carter group. It's 8,000 people. Public opinion says wait, and the school board isn't waiting. When public opinion is challenged, it's just like a gasoline fire, and I don't think anything can stop trouble. I don't mind telling you a bunch of oilfield roughnecks have told me they're going to do things their own way. All I can do is pray for the best, but there's hotheads on both sides." Carter insisted that, except for a few families from California and Kansas, his congregation was solidly behind him. "God segregated the three children of Noah," he added piously.

This was too much for the Reverend Mr. Mitchell S. Epperson, pastor of Albuquerque's Northminster Presbyterian Church and president of the Ministerial Alliance. In a letter issued to the press, he charged Carter with "social heresy of the worst sort," and accused Carter of "trying to ease your conscience by finding religious sanction for your racial bigotry and intolerance. . . . It is most unfortunate that the one articulate voice in the state of New Mexico against public school desegregation should be that of a Christian minister."

The leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, embarrassed by the whole business, explained that the convention had no control over an individual preacher like Carter. Executive Secretary Harry P. Stagg said the convention was firmly behind the move toward desegregation, and the Reverend Mr. Lewis Myers, editor of the *Baptist New Mexican,* indicated he would praise the Supreme Court decision editorially. Advised of Myers's editorial stand, Carter commented, "He's just rotten wrong."

By now Carter was growing more belligerent, and more incoherent. "I'm not giving up. I'm not getting out. I'm standing by my convictions," he said. "From all indications the government or Supreme Court did this thing more to appease Communist Russia and to stop propaganda than to think of hardships placed on the Southern Negro and Southern white man."

With that, Carter called an emergency meeting of his segregation committee at the Rock Chapel Church, and they voted to ask Governor Edwin L. Mechem to declare martial law in Hobbs. As Carter's warnings grew more violent, District Attorney Patrick Hannegan called him in for a talk. Present at the conference were two deputy sheriffs, a state policeman, and a Hobbs city policeman. "You called me here," Carter complained, "but I didn't know every gunman in the county was going to be here." Hannegan explained that he wanted the law enforcement agencies to know what was going on.

Then he warned Carter about compulsory school attendance, about penalties for interfering with school attendance (this for the benefit of segregation committee members who had been actively soliciting parents to refuse to send their children to school because they feared trouble), and laws dealing with unlawful assembly, conspiracy, rioting, and other forms of violence.

After the conference, the segregation committee complained that no one from NAACP had been called in and warned about the consequences of rioting. "Could it be that our brilliant district attorney thought that Negroes did not have equal rights to know the law, or was he using this meeting to discriminate against the segregation committee and Bill T. Carter?" They suggested that not enough protection was being arranged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for white children. "The Negro race has been set back a hundred years," trumpeted Carter. "The Negroes are a defeated race."

The district attorney, said Carter, had handled him "in a Communistic way." He reported that "pistol toters were there with their guns loosened for action. . . . I have been made a hostage, and if any violence occurs I will be the first one arrested. . . . In other words, if a Negro stabs me I can't object. My hands are tied. I cannot even protect myself. God will take care of me. There definitely is going to be trouble. That is the reason we need martial law."

The day before registration, reporters and photographers from all over the nation converged on Hobbs, including a team from *Life* and cameramen for CBS-TV, ready to document the expected mayhem. But registration came and went, police cars patrolled school zones, Negro students mingled with white children, there was a minimum of absenteeism—and nothing happened. Or rather something happened but it was hard to photograph: Hobbs ignored the Reverend Mr. Bill T. Carter.

The Carter group made a last attempt to fight desegregation by running a few candidates for the school board several months later. But the showing they made was pitiful. And when a minister from Poona, India, wrote a letter to *Time* criticizing American attitudes toward desegregation, *Time* cited Hobbs as a place "where desegregation—after a brief flareup—now works."

THE Hobbs episode was the last gasp of those who would give respectable sanction to either segregation or discrimination in New Mexico. Since then the state legislature has passed, and Governor John Simms has signed into law, the New Mexico Civil Rights Act of 1955, a comprehensive, statewide anti-discrimination measure, declaring the *right* of all persons "to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of any place of public accommodation, resort, or amusement within the State of New Mexico subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons."

Although the new act contains no penalty provisions, its supporters believe it is enforceable under the general principles of law and equity, and are prepared to bring a test case to court if East Siders prove recalcitrant. *Ubi jus ibi remedium*—where there is a right, there is a remedy—is a long respected maxim of American jurisprudence.

Those who insist that we cannot legislate against prejudice are victims of semantic confusion. No one ever suggests a law against prejudice—which, like the impulse to murder, is no more than a thought or feeling. The proposed legislation is always directed against discrimination and segregation—which, like murder and rape, are acts. So while it is perfectly true that we cannot, by law, prevent people from thinking thoughts, we *can*, by law, protect prospective victims in case the thoughts are translated into action.

Machiavelli once said, in discussing reformers and innovators, that the important question was "whether in order to carry out their designs they have to entreat or are able to compel. In the first case, they invariably succeed ill, and accomplish nothing; but when they can depend on their own strength and are able to use force, they rarely fail." The NAACP and its friends may not go all the way with Machiavelli. But they have seen the City Commission in Albuquerque remain firm in the face of threats and warnings from the glib practitioners of word magic. They have seen the district attorney in Hobbs read the riot act *in advance* to potential rioters. And they have concluded that, where those who possess authority are prepared to exercise it, matters like discrimination and segregation may be legislated against with a high expectation of success.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE IN LONDON

Landmark in International Jewish Relations

A BRITISH OBSERVER

EVEN though its results are still not fully apparent or appreciated, the Consultative Conference of Jewish Organizations, held in London from June 12 to 16 of this year, has already had important effects. The negative controversy around the Conference and, even more, its own achievement in bringing to the fore some fundamental problems that have lain hidden beneath the new pattern taken by Jewish life within the last decade, have already troubled the complacent routine into which Jewish public opinion and communal leadership had lapsed.

In view of the Conference's accomplishment in directing attention to certain trends and needs that can no longer be ignored if Jewish communal existence is to go on, the charge made against it by Zionist and World Jewish Congress opponents that it was "not representative" and was called merely by "associations of private individuals" seems irrelevant. Of the three organizations which jointly sponsored the Conference —the American Jewish Committee, the Anglo-Jewish Association, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle—the last two have been in useful existence not only much longer than the WJC, but even longer than the Zionist Congress itself; and the American Jewish Committee has a record of Jewish service reaching back over a half century. As was pointed out during the controversy in the columns of the London *Jewish Chronicle,* Dr. Nahum Sokolow himself, in his *History of Zionism,* acknowledged that "the public demonstration, the conference, the international gatherings for Jewish purposes, now a phenomenon of everyday life in Jewry, owed to the Association and the Alliance their origin. . . . Thus the organizations and those who established them merit the recognition and the gratitude of all who hold to the Jewish national ideal and strive for its fulfilment."

Today the Association, the Alliance, and the American Jewish Committee form the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, which is recognized by the United Nations but is apparently still denied recognition by those who have lost the ability to see beyond their own narrowly vested interest.

Despite the determined efforts of these parties—Mr. R. Carvalho, president of the AJA, called it "an organized conspiracy" to wreck the Conference, and a sustained campaign to slander it beforehand as "an anti-Zionist affair viewed with distrust by Israel" —over one hundred Jewish communal leaders from seventeen Jewish communities and several world Jewish organizations west of the Iron Curtain assembled in London for the five days of deliberations. The Conference was never intended as an attempt "to break the Zionist monopoly over international Jewish affairs" (as it had been termed by the American anti-Zionist *Jewish Newsletter*). If this imaginary fear on the part of Zionists did gain some substance afterwards, it was entirely due to their own ill-judged and ill-mannered campaign, which, having failed, boomeranged against its instigators.

The other charge—that the Conference was being "viewed with distrust by Israel"—collapsed even more manifestly when the

---

ONE of the most important events in the world of international Jewish affairs took place in London this past June: the Consultative Conference of Jewish Organizations. "British Observer" is a veteran reporter and analyst of Jewish affairs in Great Britain and elsewhere.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Israeli government appointed its consul in London, R. Amir, as its observer throughout the proceedings, and when the opening and the Israeli sessions were addressed by Israel's ambassador to Britain, Eliahu Elath; on this second occasion the Embassy's counsellor, G. Avner, likewise delivered a talk. Both not only recognized but publicly acknowledged the debt Israel owed to the ideals and activities of the organizations sponsoring the Conference, and called for their continued cooperation. Thus organized Zionism's claim to be the only pro-Israel force in Diaspora Jewry today received patent disproof.

THE Conference was rightly described as "the lineal successor" of the European Conference that was convened, likewise in London, by two of the same sponsoring organizations (AJA and AJC) from February 23 to March 2, 1946. Apart from a few organizations—among them the British Board of Deputies, which abstained from attending this year's Conference under the combined pressure of the Zionist Organization and the World Jewish Congress—there were also missing this year delegates from all the East European Jewish communities that had sent representatives to the 1946 Conference. Their absence indicated that the hope of cooperation, or at least of contact, between the Jewries of the West and the East—one of the highlights of the 1946 Conference—was among the casualties of the cold war. "The Jews behind the Iron Curtain," Rabbi Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth of Nations, told the Conference, "are in a state of incommunicado as far as the rest of Jewry is concerned."

Despite the gaps caused by voluntary or enforced abstention, the Conference was—in the words of the report of its Steering Committee—"broadly based" in composition. Also, it was "solely consultative in character." Although great play was made by its opponents with the argument that some of the participants in the Conference were merely observers, the distinction between "observer" and "delegate" proved purely formal, for all had the same right to address it and no vote was taken on any issue. What really mattered was that over a hundred Jewish men and women in positions of leadership in their respective communities, representing between them a million and a half European and North African Jews, and "varying shades of Jewish opinion and religious practice, were at one in a common goal—the strengthening and enrichment of Jewish life" (from the report of the Steering Committee). Neville Laski, the chairman of the Steering Committee, described the Conference as "a great Jewish occasion." The messages of encouragement sent by President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles, the presence at the Conference's reception of diplomatic representatives from various countries, and the daily reports in the general British press were evidence that this view was shared in non-Jewish circles.

With its apparatus of documentation and information, the simultaneous English-French translations through earphones, and the tables labeled with the names of the countries of origin of the various delegations, the Conference seemed like a miniature United Nations Assembly. It was made up of representatives from Jewish communities in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Gibraltar, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia and Western Germany. The delegates from Morocco were prevented from arriving by the serious developments then taking place in their country. In addition, the Conference was attended by leading members of international Jewish organizations mainly active in Jewish welfare and relief; these included the Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA), the Union World ORT, and the World Sephardi Federation.

The delegation from the American Jewish Committee—headed by its president, Irving M. Engel, its honorary president, Jacob Blaustein, vice-president Herbert B. Ehrmann, and executive vice-president John Slawson—was the largest after the British

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and French teams. The AJC delegation brought to the Conference much more than the obvious American flair for organization, documentation, and publicity. It put at the disposal of the delegates a vast amount of experience in dealing with communal problems and questions of inter-group relations on a continental scale. Above all, it brought the pledge, from Mr. Engel, of "the full measure of support to the development of future plans that will enable European Jewry better to satisfy their own communal needs." It was this promise of American Jewish assistance without any attempt to dictate to the recipients any specific course of action, and the general American attitude of *posing* rather than *answering* the questions which confront European and North African Jewry, that so favorably impressed the other delegates.

WHAT are these questions? In 1946, the dominant problem before the Conference was "to unite in the path of rescue, resettlement and reconstruction." Today the central problem—as summed up in one of the "working documents" of the Conference—is "whether European Jewry, having escaped physical extermination, can deal with the real threat to its spiritual survival."

The Americans wanted to know whether the Jews of Europe now regarded their reconstructed communal existence on the Continent as permanent, both physically and spiritually. "We want to evaluate," declared Mr. Engel in London, "the extent to which we have been able to rescue from the ashes of postwar Europe the seeds of our own rebirth on the Continent." Could these communities "create enough spiritual cohesiveness and a sense of belonging to guarantee the survival of European Jewish life?" Have the Jews of free Europe remained there "despite the great attraction of Israel merely as a result of inertia and complacency, or is it rather the consequence of deep soul-searching and the conviction that their future lies here?"

Mr. Blaustein inquired whether there had been any deep-rooted change in the general environment and in the over-all attitude towards Jews as a result of Hitlerism; how the stronger and larger Jewish communities could cooperate with the smaller ones in the building up of spiritual, educational, and cultural resources; and how organizations working to further human rights and to abolish discrimination could be helped in their task.

Formulating the American approach to all these problems, both Mr. Engel and Mr. Blaustein made it clear that no outsider could answer these questions for European Jewry. Said Mr. Engel: "The decision must rest with the Jewish communities of Europe alone. The Consultative Conference hopes to elicit the free expression of Europe's Jews and to ascertain their spiritual and material needs and assets. For American Jews, the Conference will be a unique opportunity to learn, to understand, and if we can, to help our co-religionists on the Continent."

It is *the* measure of the earnestness of the Conference that the answers it gave to these questions facing it went to the roots of Jewish community existence. It gave these answers in various ways—through "working documents" which set out the problems and salient facts for each session, through the reports of the representatives from different communities, and through the delegates and their statements.

IN REVIEWING events and trends during the last decade, the general document on "The Jewish Situation in Western Europe" stated that "after the first great postwar task of keeping Jews alive, there came the urgent problem of resettling the Jews on the move, and of emptying the DP camps. . . . Eventually, half a million European Jews—five out of every six to leave the Continent—were to make their way to Israel. The majority of the rest went to the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Australia. . . . The emphasis on migration and on refugees had given rise to a 'departure psychology' which affected many in Western Europe who were, in the end, not to leave at all. This attitude arose out of the conviction . . . that a re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vival of Jewish life in Western Europe was impossible, or that the forces and funds to rebuild this life might be more profitably used in other directions. . . . By 1951 the once hotly argued question as to whether Jews should remain in Europe or not had been settled. It is clear that, by and large, Western Jews had ceased to consider emigration as the solution to their problems. . . . Thus, as refugees left Western Europe or became absorbed there, more and more attention was directed to local community needs."

It was stated further that the creation of Israel both injected "a new vigor into local Jewish communal life in Western Europe," and provided "a solution for the refugee and DP problems which so overshadowed community developments. For everywhere Israel's emergence promoted interest in Judaism and Jewish activities on the part of many who had never shown any desire to participate in Jewish life, and the communities benefited thereby . . . much of the enthusiasm and interest engendered at this time was, unfortunately, not turned to good account, and many who had been drawn into Jewish affairs drifted away again. . . . For all communities, increasingly the problem became how to bring the unattached Jew into communal life."

Having described the fight for restitution and indemnification as one of the major aspects of the struggle to make European Jewry self-supporting, the report went on to say that "nowhere have the heirless and unclaimed Jewish assets recovered been near the material losses suffered. Nevertheless, they have played a significant role in rebuilding Jewish life and in aiding surviving victims of Nazism."

The survey admits the continued existence of anti-Semitism and, what is even more important, the "long-range effects of Nazi indoctrination, not openly expressed but felt by Jews in a hundred little ways." The special document on this problem, entitled "The Struggle Against Intolerance," states that from 1951 onwards "the threat presented by open neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic groups in Western Europe waned. . . . There do not appear at present to be any open totalitarian forces which seem capable of acting as a catalyst and focal point for neo-Nazi and collaborationist elements. At the same time, one must be alert for more diffuse and covert forms of neo-Nazi expressions which, by their very nature, are more difficult to counteract."

The authors of the surveys reached the conclusion, which was supported by the reports from individual delegates, that "Jewish life in Western democratic lands can grow and flourish, depending primarily on the will, the courage, and the adaptability of the Jewish communities themselves. The record of the past ten years is proof of this."

THE conviction that there was a future for Jewish community life in Europe, and the determination to assure its distinctive continuity, provided the real hallmark of the Conference. Mr. Carvalho spoke of "the ability of Jews to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of persecution and despair" as "a quality developed in the hard and exacting school of many thousands of years of bitter experience." Jewish life in Western Europe, he told the Conference, had now "settled down into a permanent structure," and there was no longer any controversy about whether it would continue.

This was borne out by the reports from the delegates of each Jewish community represented in London, large and small. "Significant above all in these reports," stated the Steering Committee in its summary of the Conference, "was the fact that in none was there even a suggestion of the liquidation of any community. All spoke only of re-creation, of rehabilitation, of a continued future. All were based on the same premise: that Jews would continue to live where they are now and that the task before them was the strengthening and deepening of their communal life infused with a strong sense of Jewish values."

The Conference showed, moreover, a mature approach to the central issue of the distinctive and creative continuity of Jewish existence, and no attempt was made to ig-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more the danger signals or minimize the extent of the danger. As one delegate after another reported on the spiritual and cultural position in his own community, a common pattern was revealed. This pattern was the result partly of everyday pressures arising from a predominantly non-Jewish environment, and partly of the intensified dispersion of a greatly reduced Jewish population which could no longer be replenished, spiritually or physically, from the traditional centers of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Intermarriage, the absence of spiritual leaders and teachers, the lack of adequate Jewish education for the young were both the symptoms and the causes of a situation common to almost every community. Be it Finland in the north, or Greece in the south, or Spain in the west, none of the Jewish communities there had a rabbi to serve them. The figures published by the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities, which show that about one third of the marriages of Swiss Jews and Jewesses were to non-Jewish partners, might seem exceptionally high, but the increasing trend towards mixed marriages seemed apparent in other Jewish communities, too.

Psychological difficulties, too, arose from the pressure of the non-Jewish environment. Dr. A. Safran, Chief Rabbi of Geneva, believed that in the Diaspora, unlike Israel, there was "the dualism between the condition of being a Jew and the ambition of being a man," and that in the educational field there was the conflict between the demands of Jewish religious teaching and the reality of the Jewish home and community, both of which were lacking in Jewish spirit.

But the picture had also a brighter side, mainly in the reawakened desire of Jewish communities to survive spiritually. The centrifugal trends were being counterbalanced, at least in a number of communities, both by a strengthening of the community structure and by a heightening of the interest on the part of youth in their spiritual heritage. The originally American and British design of community centers is becoming more familiar on the European continent, too, and some communities reported progress in the building of Jewish educational institutions.

Out of the realization of the community of needs and dangers, there was born at the Conference an almost instinctive craving for common efforts, and the delegates listened with particular interest to Mr. Ehrmann's account of how small Jewish communities in America "grouped" their activities, employing "roving rabbis" and "roving teachers." The proposed remedies ranged from a suggestion by a Belgian delegate to establish a "Jewesco" on the lines of Unesco, to less ambitious plans for intercommunal cooperation such as a central Jewish library, common seminaries for the training of rabbis and teachers, or, as suggested by Dr. John Slawson, the setting up of scholarships for European Jewish students for training in American theological and educational or social welfare institutions.

Indeed, so urgent was the sense of the need for action, common action, that it came almost as an anti-climax when all that the Steering Committee proposed, at the end of the Conference, was that the three sponsoring bodies should convene working groups on an *ad hoc* basis "to evolve the methods and suggest the means whereby the several European communities through voluntary cooperative effort may translate the conclusions reached by this Conference into positive action." It needed the assurance of Mr. Engel that "this Conference was not the end, it is only the beginning towards the realization of the hopes engendered by it," to restore to the departing delegates the conviction that, although solely consultative in character, the Conference was capable of practical achievement.

THE sponsors of the Conference emphasized all along that they did not intend to set up any supra-national Jewish organization, or even to create a permanent machinery for the implementation of decisions that the Conference might come to. The framework of international Jewish cooperation is in itself an important and controversial problem in Jewish communal affairs. The record of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the World Jewish Congress has shown that permanent machinery is in itself neither a guarantee of strength nor a means for the solution of urgent needs. On the other hand, the Conference on German Reparations had proved the value of *ad hoc* associations for limited and clearly defined purposes. The success or failure of the London Conference will, therefore, be measured not only against the objectives for which it was originally convened, but also in relation to the character of Jewish cooperative effort.

The same is true with regard to two other fundamental issues discussed at the Conference and reflected in the controversy around the Conference itself: the impact of Israel upon Jewry elsewhere, and the relations between Zionists and non-Zionists today.

The obvious elements in the relations between the Jewish state and the Jewish people —such as the former's role as a refuge for persecuted or homeless Jews, the enhancement of the status of the Jew everywhere, and the readiness and duty of Jewry to assist Israel—found, of course, frequent occasion for acknowledgment at the Conference. And its final report was quite justified in stating that "it was easily apparent that the whole Conference stood united in its sympathy and in the warmth of its good wishes for Israel," and that "virtually all of the principal addresses including those of the Israeli ambassador and of the presidents of the three sponsoring organizations . . . stressed the importance of a viable Israel as a place of immigration for those Jews who might wish to make it their home."

But it was at the special session on the impact of Israel on Jewish communities abroad that their interrelationship was approached, from both sides, in a manner so stimulating as to upset not only many a platitude and illusion, but also those who took spiritual refuge behind them.

It started with the analysis by Isaiah Berlin of the *psychological* impact of the establishment of Israel on Jews and non-Jews in the lands of Jewish Diaspora. The emergence of Israel, he told the delegates, had altered the old "image of the Jew" which had grown up among Gentiles and among Jews themselves in the conditions of the Diaspora. Both had come to regard the Jew as an oddity and an anomaly: while non-Jews looked upon him with curiosity and suspicion and thought of him as a superfluous element that caused uneasiness to himself and others, Jews looked upon themselves as more humane, better educated people than the average (especially in Eastern Europe), but nevertheless as "homeless outcasts," always on the run and always on the defensive, who deserved sympathy and had constantly to cope with the hostility of their neighbors. This image was the core of "the Jewish problem," and it had forced the Jews to build around themselves protective ghettos and to develop a pathetic attitude of constant apology.

The emergence of Israel, Mr. Berlin said, was bound to alter all that. For whether they liked it or not, the Jews of the Diaspora were identified with the Jews in Israel, and were, therefore, now looked upon by their neighbors as normal human beings possessed of all the attributes of nationhood and statehood. On the non-Jewish side this would gradually cause the dissipation of suspicion surrounding the Jewish minorities. To the Jews themselves the creation of Israel would prove "a liberating factor." The establishment of the state had cleared the air and made the Jews reflect upon where they stood. With the choice before them—either to stay among the other nations or to become Israelis —Jews in the Diaspora would cease to "fidget" and stop feeling as if they were "cooped up in a corner"—a state of nervousness which actually asked that Jews be kicked.

The "political gulf" and the "natural fission" which would develop between the Jews inside and outside Israel was a process which Mr. Berlin viewed "without any special degree of horror." Those who would desire to satisfy their national aspirations would gravitate to Israel, he said, while those who remained would mingle much more naturally and less self-consciously and in a more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

productive fashion with their fellow citizens than had been possible hitherto. Thus both in Israel and in the Jewish Diaspora conditions of greater normality would prevail.

Isaiah Berlin's analysis did not lead to the Koestlerian conclusion that assimilation was the only course for the Diaspora now that a national Jewish homeland had become a reality. While he did not believe in the thesis of Ahad Ha'am that Israel would be able to permeate effectively the spiritual life of Jewry outside, Mr. Berlin equally rejected any notion that millions of Jews in the Diaspora would commit "national harakiri." "While politically and socially they would become more integrated with their environment, they would remain culturally and religiously individuated," he predicted.

IN THE course of the ensuing debate the two top representatives of the State of Israel in Britain made pronouncements which at once demolished the Zionist-*cum*-World Jewish Congress campaign against the Conference and revealed the irrelevance of an ideological argument already overtaken by events.

Gershon Avner, counsellor to the Israeli Embassy in London, who spoke as "an Israeli of the younger generation," confessed his surprise at the warmth for Israel and the deep Jewish solidarity displayed at the Conference. He had been brought up, he said, in the belief that the organizations which had sponsored this Conference were, "to use the English art of understatement," non-Zionist. It was time that "we in Israel should also recognize that the old schisms and divisions in Jewry had been superseded by the course of events."

The Israeli ambassador, who had arrived unexpectedly and had taken a seat at the table of the delegation from the Alliance Israélite Universelle, declared that the underlying principle of the Alliance—*Kol Yisrael chaverim*—still held good. It was not always easy to foresee how the trends affecting the relations between the Jewish people and the Jewish state would ultimately shape themselves, but he was sure that eventually both would recognize that the strength of either depended on the strength of the other, and that the success of both depended on their cooperation.

Greeted with applause by the whole Conference, this genuinely Israeli approach caused unmitigated embarrassment to Zionist partisans. In a forthright article, after the Conference, the influential London *Jewish Chronicle* thus summed up the position:

> Having rejected in theory Mr. Ben-Gurion's conception of Zionism as the duty of every Zionist to settle in Israel, having failed in practice to organize any appreciable aliya from the West, and having—quite rightly—adopted the alternative concept that Israel needs a strong Diaspora, the leaders of the Zionist Federation and the W.J.C. found themselves, uncomfortably, in accord with their historical enemies. And, what is more, the enemies of yesterday have proved to be the allies of today in all the political and practical efforts made on behalf of the newly created Jewish state. Instead of accepting this partnership and unity so as to prevent the occurring of a political gulf between Israel and the Diaspora, forecast by Mr. Isaiah Berlin, they elected to continue the schisms which, in the phrase of Mr. G. Avner, had been superseded by the course of history.

Thus it happened that the European Conference in London, called to review and assess the developments, trends, and needs of European and North African Jewry during the last decade, has also reopened "a grand debate" on problems which lay beyond its original scope. And that is just as well. For in the long run all these problems will have to be solved in relation to each other.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE THE CANARIES FROM THEIR CAGES!

A Story

ARTHUR GRANIT

THINGS were not only bad on our street, they were terrible. And not only were they terrible, they were worse than terrible. Just when we thought we had hit a new low, zoom, down we went further. "This is the bottom!" we would say. And zoom, we were below the bottom. "It can't get worse!" And zoom, zoom, darn it if we weren't below the bottom of the bottom. Yes! Things were really bad!

The men on our street had lost their jobs and were now making an appearance as housewives: marketing, cleaning, and taking care of the little ones. This was bad. But then they began, like their wives, to get into fights. This was terrible. And then it didn't take long before the electric companies began to shut off our meters. This was really worse than terrible. And when entire families sat around tables lit with candles because the electric was off, and all they had was a loaf of bread and tea, and when someone would invariably say, "It can't get worse!" this was near the bottom. But when they went to the corner grocery to borrow on the bills so that they could have carfare to go looking for jobs, this was the bottom. And as if that were not enough, this particular winter was extra cold, so that, without money, we sat around without heat. This was below the bottom. And when the pipes began to freeze and burst, this was further down. Really, there was no end to how far down things went. Even the bottom had a bottom.

One day my friend Usher was blessed by a visit from his "rich" aunt from Boro Park. "Your pots don't shine enough!" she said.

"Maybe it's the Brillo I'm using!" said Usher's mother.

"Something smells here!" said the "rich" aunt, adjusting the tablecloth.

"I'll open the window!" said Usher's mother.

"It's time the boy received a good Jewish education!" said the "rich" aunt, opening the closet to see if everything was properly arranged.

"And with what will I pay for it?" said Usher's mother.

"Israel will perish unless he gets an education!"

I looked at Usher sitting very sheepishly and turning his head from one speaker to the other. It was hard for me to connect the fate of Israel with Usher.

"Anyway," said the "rich" aunt, "I never heard of a Jewish boy not getting a Jewish education! It could only happen in Brownsville! Everything happens in Brownsville! It could never happen in Boro Park!"

"All right! I'll shine up the pots!" said Usher's mother.

THE next thing you knew, Usher's Uncle Simchie appeared, a tall handsome man whom the women of our street doted on.

"No rabbi for the child?" asked Uncle Simchie.

"I see the post office is busy sending mail!" said Usher's mother, knowing there had been intra-family consultations about this.

"Wait! You'll die and he'll say *Kaddish* in English!"

"God forbid!" said Usher's mother.

"Just imagine!" he said. "It's raining and we're all standing dressed in black, and they lower your body into the grave and pile the sand on it. And yours, yours gets up to say Kaddish! *Yisgadal veyiskadash shmey rabor!*' he should say. But he won't say it! Other Jewish boys will say it! But not yours! Yours will say it in English!"

"I'm a believer!" said Usher's mother, perspiring freely. "But my husband is not. I fight with him all the time! When Passover

---

ARTHUR GRANIT was born in Brooklyn in 1920 and received his education at Brooklyn College and Columbia University. He teaches English in the New York City public school system. This is his first published short story.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comes, he says to me, 'Another set of pots she has to buy! We don't even have bread in the house, and she must buy more pots!' And he's right! God understands English!"

"God understands English, but will you?" said Uncle Simchie, and then bursting forth in his beautiful baritone, he sang, *"Yisgadal veyiskadash shmey rabor!*—We must keep Israel alive!"

"Keep Israel alive?" said Usher's mother. "We're having trouble keeping ourselves alive!"

THIRD visitor. The grandfather. The grandfather who owed them three hundred and thirty dollars. Unfortunately, Usher's father was home at the time.

"How's business in Bayonne?" asked Usher's faher sarcastically.

"The child can't read a prayer book!" said Usher's grandfather.

"To work in a shop, he doesn't have to know how to read a prayer book!"

"Before the doubter criticizes the word of God, let him know more than those who speak the word of God!"

"There are those who say they speak the word of God, and further there are those who say they speak with God!"

"God is, no matter whether man speaks of or with!"

"When those who owe me money pay me it, I will be able to satisfy them about my son speaking of and with!"

The old man grew furious.

"Do you mean to tell me," he screamed, "that I'm responsible for the ignorance of this child!"

"That's exactly what I mean!" said Usher's father.

"And how am I responsible?" screamed the grandfather.

"You are exactly three hundred and thirty dollars worth responsible!"

"I'm insulted!" said the old man, raising himself to his full height. "You can expect a check in the mail every week providing the money is used for the child's education."

"Send the checks," said Usher's father, "and the child gets the education."

"It will be a good deed!"

"Will it be a good check?" Usher's father asked.

"Israel must be maintained!" said Usher's grandfather as he went down the stairs.

"The check will maintain it!" said Usher's old man, and then turning to his wife, added, "I'll get that money back yet, even if I have to send the kid to Hebrew school!"

If I've shown anyone in a bad light, I should like you to know that I don't mean to. If I've shown the apostate as a little stronger than the believer, it is only because we were living in a time of apostasy. Neither believer nor non-believer was a product of his own self, each was a product of different sides of our dark and alien, suffering street. And in spite of Usher's father's bad manners and hot speech, I think we must remember that as he had to worry so much about his bread, he had little time to worry about God. As for the grandfather, if I have shown him to be a little foolish, remember he was living in an alien land.

Now, like clockwork, a check for fifty cents would appear in the mail every week.

"A rabbi in the house!" said Usher's mother.

"The Workmen's Hebrew School!" said Usher's father.

"A rabbi in the house!" said Usher's mother.

"The Workmen's Hebrew School!" said Usher's father.

"Why not a rabbi?" said Usher's mother.

"A question of principle!"

"What principle?"

"The principle that rabbis turn out only scoundrels and thieves!"

"A new kind of principle!"

"Well, look at your family. A father a scoundrel; a brother a thief! Living proof!"

"A rabbi in the house!"

"The Workmen's Hebrew School!"

Stalemate! Nothing moved!

WE, USHER, his mother, and I, were sitting in Usher's house having tea and black bread. The electricity had been shut off and a pair of lighted candles stood on the table.

"I'll die of shame if anyone comes tonight," said Usher's mother.

"Dat's all right!" I said. "We've been sitting in the dark for two weeks already in my house."

"No electric for two weeks?" said Usher's mother, suddenly grown curious, and then as if she did not want Usher to hear: "Go down and hang up the sign."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My friend Usher departed from the kitchen with a "Furnished Room to Let."

"It's nice to have no electric," I said, looking at the flame quivering at the top of the candle. "Everything is yellow. And shadows move up and down and ghosts come!"

I don't think she knew what I was talking about.

Then all of a sudden, in this kitchen while the yellow flame came from the candlelight, and ghostly shadows moved up and down, I began to feel old, so very old, as old as Usher's mother, for this tender and pious woman began to speak to me as if to an equal.

"Young one," she said, "things are really bad!"

"Yes," I said, "they're killing Jews in Hamburg."

"It's getting worse!" she said.

"Yes," I said, "they're killing Jews in Frankfort!"

"What does your mother do for bread?"

"She goes to the corner grocery. We got a bill there for seventy-three dollars and fourteen cents cash. They're killing Jews all over the world!"

Somewhere in the back of my head there glimmered the realization that I should have never said this, that if my mother knew what I had told Usher's mother, she would be very angry. But there was something about this woman that made me tell everything.

"Next week my Pop is going to put in an application for relief. We can't pay the rent! My old lady has no money for shoes! She says she'll have to go out and pluck chickens. We owe the iceman money. We owe the egg man and the milkman. We owe! We owe! We owe!" and then taking a sip of tea, I added: "Things are really bad. They're just killing, killing the Jews!"

Suddenly from the stairs there was the sound of people walking up and Usher's excited voice.

"Guests!" cried Usher's mother, running about the kitchen, setting the tablecloth right, wiping the table. "My rich sister from Boro Park! And me with no electric! How can I explain it to her!"

But in walked Usher, smiling and happy, followed by his father carrying a large package covered with a cloth, which he set down on the table.

"Look!" said Usher as he snatched the cover off. "A bird!"

And there on the table, in an enormous metal cage, jumped a tiny yellow canary.

"That's the only thing we're missing!" said Usher's mother. "In the middle of everything, you have to bring a chicken."

"It's not a chicken!" said Usher. "It's a gen-u-ine canary!"

"It's not even a chicken!" said his mother, screwing up her face. "A chicken, at least, we could eat!"

And then she sat down and cried as if her heart would break.

"Sing, little bird, sing," she cried. "Sing at my misfortune!"

And as she cried, there in that room with the candles flickering yellow light, and the shadow of the bird looking black and large on the wall, the little yellow bird began to sing.

At first my friend Usher could not do enough for the bird. He fed it, bathed it, saw that it got enough exercise, and covered the cage at night. He even got books on birds and studied up on them. But it wasn't long before his interest lagged and his mother had to take over the care of the bird.

Chirp! Chirp! How that damn bird did chirp! All day long he jumped up and down in his cage, exercising on his swing. And eat! You should have seen him gobble up those seeds! And dirty! All day long you had to clean that cage! And money! Everything would have been all right but the seeds cost money! Because for five cents you could go to New York by subway to look for a job! Chirp!

"What are you working so hard, jumping up and down the cage?" said Usher's mother to the bird. "What are you so happy for?"

But it wasn't long before the bird stopped singing.

"Unhappy house! Unhappy bird!" said Usher's mother.

And now I knew that the bird belonged.

THE decision was made one night while Usher's father was reading his paper. He looked up and said, "They're killing Jews in Germany!" By this time the expression had become a kind of salutation on our street, like "Good morning!"

"Just for that," he said, "my boy will get

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a good Jewish education! We've got to show those damn Germans!"

"A rabbi in the house!" said Usher's mother.

"Yes!" said Usher's father finally. "A rabbi in the house! *And* the Workmen's Hebrew School! Both!"

The pale canary gave a tiny chirp.

And so my hero Usher got more than he had bargained for. Twice a week there came a small bearded man with curls hanging from his ears, dressed in a long black gabardine coat and carrying a cane, giving Usher lessons from a book in which you read from right to left. And four times a week Usher put in an appearance at the Workmen's Hebrew School, where Yiddish was spoken.

And now, under the most unlikely circumstances, my hero Usher would suddenly burst forth in Hebrew. I remember one Friday night, we, Usher, my friends Bibi, Pickles, Robby, and I, were lying on the mattress in our hut, smoking cigarettes, when Usher said:

"There's to be no smoking in this here hut any more!"

"Why not?" said Bibi.

"It's Friday night! No smoking on Friday night!"

"What's Friday night?" asked Bibi.

"You're a Jew, ain't you?"

"Yes," answered Bibi.

"Well, Jews is not supposed to smoke on Friday night!"

"Why not?" asked Bibi.

"Because God said so!" said Usher.

"How do you know He said so?"

"Because Moses said God said so!"

"How do you know Moses said so?"

"Because the Bible says Moses said God said so!"

"How do you know the Bible says so?" asked Bibi.

"Because *Boruch atoh adonoi elohenu melech hoelum asheh,*" said Usher.

I don't have to tell you that my hero Usher's Hebrew had nothing to do with the point in question. Later, when I began to study the language, I found out it was the first sentence in the prayer book. And even that had been quoted incorrectly. But it knocked the props from under Bibi.

"What's dat?" said the flabbergasted Bibi.

"Dat's Hebrew, stupid! Don't you know anything?"

"Don't call me stupid!"

"You're real stupid, stupid!" said Usher.

"I'm not stupid!"

"You're a Jew, ain't you!"

"Yes!"

"You don't know Hebrew when you hear it. Do you?"

"No."

"Then you're stupid. Every good Jew has to know Hebrew if he wants to get to heaven. Every good Jew knows he's not supposed to smoke on Friday night. And you're not a good Jew!"

"You mean I'm not going to heaven?"

"Dat's right."

"You mean you're going to heaven?"

"Dat's right. There's a place reserved there for me."

"O.K.!" said Bibi. "I'll put out the cigarette."

This was the influence of the rabbi who came to the house; the influence of the Workmen's Hebrew School was of another kind.

"I'm a worker!" announced Usher to his mother one day.

"I didn't hear you!" said Usher's mother, shining up one of her empty pots.

"I'm a worker!" repeated Usher. "I'm the salt of the earth."

"Isn't my Usher wonderful?" she said, turning to me and smiling. "He knows his family's in trouble and he wants to help out."

"But you don't understand!" cried Usher.

"What don't I understand?" said his mother. "What I've forgotten, you'll never know!"

"I'm a socialist!" said Usher.

"So?" said his mother.

"So, I'm a socialist!" said Usher.

"I'm dying!" said Usher's mother, beginning to understand. "A socialist! In my own house! Don't you dare say another word! The walls have ears!"

"Socialist! Socialist! Socialist! I'm a socialist!" said Usher.

Bang! Right across the face she smacked him.

"Socialist fool!" cried Usher's mother. "Do you want me to sit out my days mourning for you when they deport you to the other side? This is what comes of the Workmen's Hebrew School. A plague on your father!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yes! They were killing Jews in Germany, but they were also killing Jews right on our street. It happened one night that right on our street corner someone shot up Louie the Lip.

"They shot Louie the Lip!" our street cried in awe.

"Louie was shot! Shot right in the back! Some coward shot him in the behind!"

"They shot him in the ass when he wasn't looking! They wouldn't dare shoot The Lip in the front!"

You should have seen the funeral. Old women and children wept. Young women threw garlands of flowers after the hearse. Young girls cried and threw their arms around Louie's henchmen who followed in big black cars. They screamed, they pushed, they fainted. While our men stood by awed and respectful. Brownsville remembers that funeral to this day: the long lines of cars, the streets crowded with people for blocks and blocks around, motorcycle cops preceding the hearse.

Yisgadal veyiskadash shmey rabah!

Yes! Our sad and unfortunate street needed Louie the Lip!

MR. GROSSMAN'S grocery. A large corner store. Bags of barley, onions, grits. Barrels of pickles, tomatoes, herring, lox. Windows full of butter and cheese and halvah. Bundles of grapes, bananas, dates, and celery. And right behind the cash register, hanging from a nail, not far from the canned goods (separate department), near the wrapping paper and the cord, hung the bills. And on those damn bills stood Goldberg, Goldblatt, Greenbaum, Greenberg, Feinberg, Feinerman, and Hammerschlag.

Early one morning Grossman himself, in a long white apron and a pencil behind his right ear, appeared in Usher's house.

"I picked you," said Mr. Grossman, "only because you and I belong in the same boat."

Usher's mother was all ears.

"I'm a businessman and you're a landlady. I would not ask anybody else on our block. Stop me if I'm wrong. I need a boy in my store for the two-week holiday rush."

"You mean my Usher?" asked the astonished mother.

"He's reliable, I hope?"

"Reliable? How could he not be reliable? He's learning Hebrew in two places!"

"Two places!" exclaimed Grossman. "I've got to have him!"

"He'll probably end up a rabbi!" said Usher's mother.

"There's no question. I've got to have the boy. And I'm giving him a fifty-cent raise even before he begins."

And that was how our socialist went to work at Grossman's.

I NEVER knew how dependent we were on my hero Usher. Because with Usher working, there was nothing for my friends Bibi, Pickles, Robby, and myself to do. The lumber yard was monotonous. Sitting and smoking in the hut was boring. Our ball-playing lost its zest. Things were just no fun any more. We would pass by Grossman's, and putting our noses to the window, look in and see my hero in his long white apron and a pencil stuck in his right ear, looking busy and important.

"Look at Usher," Robby would say. "Who would have ever thought it!"

Usher himself would come out, looking at us in disdain as if he had never known us.

"Hey, youse kids!" he would say, without batting an eyelash. "Get a move on you! You're blocking traffic. Da customers can't get in."

"What's the matter, Ush? Getting too stuck up for your old friends!" cried Pickles.

"I ain't arguing with you," said Usher. "If youse kids don't move on, I'll call the police. So get outta here and don't argue with me. Go away, children. Go ahead and play with your dollies. I got work to do!"

"I hope he breaks his neck, that damn Usher!" cried Pickles, as we began to hotfoot it down the street.

"My mother says you're to give me ten cents so I can go to the movies," said a little child in front of the counter. "Put it on the bill."

"You can't get ten cents," said Usher.

"Why not?" asked the child. "My mother said so!"

"I don't care if your grandmother said so. You can't get ten cents until you go back and bring me a note, signed and sealed by your mother, telling me to give you ten cents," said Usher.

"O.K.," said the child as he began to thread his way out of Grossman's between the stacked bags and barrels of sour pickles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And remember—no monkey-business!" Usher sternly cried after the child.

"O.K.," said the child.

I was standing in line at Grossman's having an order filled for my mother. And I could see my friend Usher running up the aisle for canned salmon, down the aisle for tuna fish, into the back for eggs, up front for herring, down below for barley.

"My mother says you're to give me ten cents so I can go to the movies."

There was the child standing at the counter again.

"You got a note, signed and sealed?" asked Usher.

The child handed him a sealed envelope. Tearing it open and reading it, my hero Usher finally looked up and said, "It's a fake! You're not getting no ten cents to go to the movies. In fact, you keep this up, you won't go to the movies, you'll go to prison, for free!"

The child retreated, stumbling over a box of eggs.

"The nerve of dat kid!" said Usher, turning to me. "Trying to steal ten cents!"

Down the barrel for a pickle! Into the bin for butter! Up the ladder for peaches! On the counter for cake!

And would you believe it, there was the child again at the counter, handing Usher another envelope.

"This is much better," said Usher, reading as he rang up the register, and taking out ten cents he tossed it across the counter to the child. "Here's the dime, and next time do it the right way. You have five minutes to get to the movies before the prices change. And remember, if you don't get there on time, you can't come back here for the other fifteen cents!"

Zip! Right out of the store flew the child!

"You gotta teach those damn kids a lesson!" said Usher.

Mr. Grossman nodded his head in approval.

"It says here," said Grossman, pointing to his newspaper, "that a milk truck turned over on the highway. Usher, put one cent extra on the milk."

And Usher ran to take out a small tab from below the counter, and sliding it into a slot on the milk bin raised the price one cent.

"Hey, Grossman!" cried one of the women on line. "What's this business? Raising the price of the milk a penny!"

"Milk shortage!" said Grossman.

A short silence. Mr. Grossman turned the page of his newspaper and continued to read.

"Hm! What do you know? General Motors is going on strike. Raise the tuna fish three cents!"

"What do you call this?" cried the woman. "Three cents more on the tuna fish! Your prices grow on the shelves!"

"Transportation tie-up. Don't you read the newspapers? Here! It says so here!" and Grossman proceeded to show the item to the woman.

"Oh, I'm dying!" he cried as he fell back from the newspaper. "They're killing Jews in Germany! Usher! Usher! Quick! Five cents more on the herring!"

"Yes," said Mr. Grossman to Usher's mother one day, "your son is real honest."

"That's because I used to bang him on the knuckles if he took anything when he was a child."

"I tested him the first day. I left twenty-five cents on the counter purposely. I threw ten cents on the floor. I hid fifteen cents in the potato sack. And would you believe it, at the end of the day he brought me fifty cents. It added up right. You can be proud of him."

"Yes," said Usher's mother, "he adds well. Got a good head!"

And as Mr. Grossman left, she turned to me and said, "Thank God, I banged that socialist monkey-business out of his head."

But (and this I hate to say) it turned out that Usher had not got that "monkey-business" out of his head.

There I was behind Jakie the Snotnose in Grossman's grocery, waiting my turn.

Up the aisle went Usher for canned salmon! Down the aisle for tuna fish! Into the back for eggs! Up front for a herring! Down below for barley! When suddenly (and I could not believe my eyes), after handing Jakie the barley, I saw, or at least I thought I saw, my hero Usher suddenly dart below the counter and coming up throw an additional fistful of barley into Jakie's bag. It happened so quickly I thought it did not happen at all.

Then I remember the time I was in line behind an old lady of our street who asked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for a herring, and saw Usher wrapping it in a newspaper, when suddenly, looking both ways, what should he do but throw an extra tail into the package. God! A thief!

Now I began to see it all. Fistfuls of barley! Tails of herring! Slices of sour pickle! A loose onion. An extra potato. Cheese in the butter. Cereal in the milk. That crook, Usher, was practically giving the store away!

I remember the to-do in Grossman's grocery the day Usher was found out. Sooner or later, I knew it was bound to happen, but personally I would have preferred it to happen later. There was such shouting and screaming from Grossman that day you would have thought the world was coming to an end.

IT MUST have been that dopey Jakie who was responsible. Or was it Usher's father? Or the Workmen's Hebrew School? Or the sad and beautiful Miriam, Jakie's mother? Or was it Grossman's grocery itself? Perhaps it was our unfortunate street that was responsible! However, no matter who, it was Usher who was caught.

There was Jakie the Snotnose asking for a dozen eggs.

Into the box for bagels. On the counter for lox. Up the aisle for salmon. Down for tuna fish. When, plop, my hero Usher, shooting a glance at Grossman, threw an extra egg into Jakie's bag.

"You're givin' me thirteen eggs," said the Snotnose, who was very smart in school. "I only want a dozen."

Mr. Grossman began to glare.

"Sorry!" said Usher as he carefully withdrew the extra egg. "Mistakes happen."

"My mother wants a half a quarter of a half a pound of barley!" said Jakie.

Down below for the barley. And while Grossman wasn't looking, plop, there went an extra handful of the stuff into the bag.

"What's that!" cried Mr. Grossman.

"Sorry!" said Usher as he put the extra handful back under the counter. "My hand slipped!"

"You don't mean slipped! You mean slippery!" said Mr. Grossman, slowly awakening to the truth of things.

"My mother wants you to write it on the bill," said Jakie the Snotnose.

"Next!" cried Usher.

The line moved forward. And it was not long before that dopey Jakie returned carrying an extra egg in his hand.

"You made a mistake. You gave me thirteen eggs," he said as he put the egg on the counter. "My mother told me to give it back."

You should have heard Grossman screaming and hollering. You should have seen the expressions of the ladies of our street standing there in line as this deluge of words surged through the store. People stopped and looked into the windows. A little crowd collected outside the front door.

"What's happening?" asked one of our neighbors.

"Grossman caught a thief stealing from his store."

"A thief—on our street?" asked another.

"A thief—from our street!" echoed a third.

"You're fired! Fired! Fired!" screamed Grossman. "Crook! Giving away my store! Fired! Fired! Fired!"

There is no point in my telling you the rest. Suffice it to say that Grossman ranted so he began to bring in things that had nothing to do with the situation. He even brought in his grandfather.

"My grandfather worked all his life!" he cried. "And in the famine he died with his legs all swollen and his stomach blown up. Oh! My poor, poor grandfather! How he would weep to see what happened to me here today—and in my own store! Ten years I worked in a shop to be able to save enough to buy this store! Ten years! And yesterday the wholesaler sends me a bunch of rotten tomatoes! Rotten tomatoes! Who can live from all this? And as if that isn't enough, eggs they give me with specks of blood in them! How can I sell this to Jews, without sin! Flies in the milk! Stale salmon even in the cans! The barley with ants in them! And as if this isn't enough—a thief in my own store! Right under my own nose! God sits in His heaven and watches! Why, God? Why?"

The women in the store suddenly held their breath in fear.

"You're fired once! You're fired twice! You're fired three times!" screamed Grossman.

The women in the store breathed again.

Flushing red, ashamed, his head bowed, unable to walk erect, his heart bleeding, the end of the world, so full of shame that he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was unable even to weep, the outcast put his apron down on the counter.

Down the aisle past the tuna fish. Out of the counter near the barley sack. Under the bunch of yellow bananas. Past the Greek salad, the potato salad, and the cole slaw, and out into the open.

Yes! The "socialist" was fired—but good!

I THINK Bibi, Pickles, Robby, and I were glad this happened to Usher, after he had treated us like dirt just because he had a job.

"That lousy Usher!" said Robby.

"He was a thief! He is a thief!" said Pickles. "He will always be a thief!"

"A crook! Dat's what he is!" said Bibi. "A no-good crook!"

We were sitting in our hut playing poker by candlelight when suddenly a big black cockroach ran across the mattress.

"Kill it!" cried Bibi.

When who should walk in, carrying a pack of cigarettes, as cool as you please, but Usher himself.

"Nobody is killing nothing!" said he, sitting down on the mattress and opening his pack of cigarettes. "There's no look-out watching on the roof. An enemy could easily surround you without a challenge. I knew I couldn't trust you guys the minute my back was turned."

And here our long-lost Usher took out a cigarette with a flourish, bent down to light it at the candle, and began puffing away.

"How about a drag?" said Pickles.

Usher ignored him.

"Say, Ush!" said Robby. "Is it true that Grossman keeps a pack of money hidden in a barley sack under the counter?"

"The rumor is false," said Usher.

"How about his underwear? Is it true he hasn't changed his underwear in the last ten years?"

"The rumor is true," said Usher.

"Is it true," asked Robby, "that Grossman kicked you out?"

"The rumor is a rotten lie!" said Usher. "We just didn't see eye to eye. I believe everything should be free. Grossman doesn't."

"How about a cigarette, Usher?" asked Pickles.

"Buy your own cigarettes, you cheap chiseler," said Usher, then added, "Everything should be free! Like the birds! Like the bees!"

I must admit the idea of everything being free appealed to me. I saw pictures of a table spread with all kinds of delicate pastries topped with whipped cream. I saw chocolate cakes and roast duck with cranberry sauce, *gefilte* fish and horse-radish, stuffed derma with roasted plums, rolled cabbage and meat, soup with *mandlen*. I saw and saw and saw.

"Everything should be free?" asked Robby.

"Yes!" said our fanatic.

"Like the birds?" asked Robby.

"Like the birds!" echoed Usher.

"Like canaries, maybe?" asked Robby.

"Like canaries!" echoed Usher.

"Is a canary a bird?" asked Robby.

"Canaries is birds!" said Usher emphatically.

It was too late.

"I know a canary that ain't free!" said Robby.

"Where's that damn canary?" cried the unthinking Usher. "We'll free it!"

"It's in a big cage!" said Robby.

"Where? Where?" exclaimed Usher.

"It's in a big cage—hanging in your own house!" said Robby, springing the trap.

"What?" cried Usher. "You mean my bird?"

"Dat's what I mean!"

But Usher was not to be daunted.

"Well, let's free him from the prison! Everything should be free!"

And we all rose up and dashed out of our hut.

"Free the canaries from their cages!" shouted the fanatic as we raced down the street. "Free all the canaries from their cages!"

WITH what fury we raced up to Usher's house, I cannot describe to you. I remember the whole thing as impossibly insane. There we were, panting and racing; our eyes staring, our faces flushed, our bodies freezing from the winter cold. And as we ran through the streets and up the stairs, into our possession came pieces of metal, sticks, glass, string, and all sorts of things.

Before you knew it we were thrusting our faces against the cage. There was the bird, near the window in the cold winter twilight, the lights of Usher's house out, the kitchen cold and forlorn, the house deserted.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And suddenly he chirped (if you could call it a chirp), his little, sad chirp. I compared the enormousness of our feelings with the smallness of the chirp. And it did not make sense to me. Something is wrong, I thought to myself as I saw the bird looking oh! so sad and small, while about him glared the large ravenous faces of Usher, Pickles, Robby, Bibi, and myself.

Why so much fury? Why so much screaming, shoving, and pushing? For what? For the small, sad bird? Why? But I did not dare to say a word, while the hot breath of my compatriots, their chests heaving with excitement, their eyes brilliant with expectation, shot through the bars of the cage and seemed to fix the bird into a kind of trance.

Like a conquering hero, like the leader of a herd, it remained for Usher to make the decision to open the door of the cage.

"Come out! Come out! Come out, little bird!" he panted.

The bird retreated to a far corner.

"Come on, birdie!" coaxed Usher. "Here's a polly-seed! Doesn't the little birdie want his polly-seed?"

Deeper into the cage retreated the bird.

"He doesn't want to come out!" cried Robby. "Let me try!"

"Here, birdie, birdie, birdie!" called Robby, coaxing him with a seed as the bird fluttered wildly in an opposite corner of the cage.

"You dumb bird! Come on out!" cried Robby as he began to thrash his hand wildly about inside the cage. "I won't hurt you!"

But the more wildly his hand thrashed, the more wildly the canary jumped about the cage.

"Don't you understand, little bird?" cried Pickles. "We don't want to hurt you! We want to set you free!"

And here Pickles inserted a stick into the cage to drive out the bird. And the bird parried it, now this way, now that.

"Throw some glass on the floor," said Bibi. "They hate glass!"

And so pieces of glass came showering down. Sticks were thrown in. Water was splashed. The cage was shoved, rolled, and pushed. And still the bird would not leave the cage.

"What a stupid bird!" cried Robby.

"You dumb canary!" cried Pickles, banging his fists against the cage. "Don't you want to be free?"

We all began to shout angrily at the bird, but he would not come out.

"Say, Usher! What do you say we go back and have a game of pinochle!" cried Robby. "This here bird is a moron! They cheated your old man when he bought this dumb canary!"

And just as we had raced up, so we raced down.

But the little yellow canary would not come out of the cage.

THERE was weeping in Usher's house the next morning.

"The chicken is dead!" cried Usher's mother. "Oh! Oh! The poor little bird has gone and left us!"

Aroused, my hero, the giver-away of Grossman's barley and Grossman's eggs and Grossman's herring-tails, the would-be emancipator of winged things, good pinochle player, confederate, and friend, ran quickly into the unheated kitchen.

"Sing, little bird! Sing!" wept Usher's mother to the dead canary. "Sing at your misfortune!"

But the little yellow bird would not sing.

"While you live," wept Usher's mother to herself, "you dare not sing; when you die you cannot!"

They took the bird out of the cage. Usher brought him down to the back yard. And if I know Usher, as he buried the stubborn bird he must have said Kaddish.

"Yisgadal veyiskadash shmey rabor."

And that is how one canary was freed from his cage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DARK AGE OF MEDIEVAL JEWRY

Persecution, Expulsion, the End of the Paris Synagogue

ALLAN TEMKO

THE spontaneous celebration to which Paris awakened on an August night in 1165 when Philip Augustus—one of the mightiest soldier-kings of the Middle Age—was born, heralded unknowingly another birth as well. It was the first true display of French national devotion, rather than feudal allegiance, to a prince. The modern European state, in a sense, dates from that outburst of popular rejoicing.

As bells rang out the good news, and criers roused the populace, the citizens of the capital rose from their beds with an enthusiasm that the Middle Age had come to expect only on religious occasions. They were swept with patriotism. The dark streets were suddenly brightened by torches. The students marched through the Left Bank, shouting their Latin songs. On the Rive Droite, already the business half of the city, merchants and artisans lifted brimming goblets. And from the Palace on Ile-de-la-Cité messengers galloped to the Cathedral; to the walled abbeys on both sides of the river; and farther, across the sleeping land, to the corners of the realm which, after his great victory at Bouvines in 1214, Philip Augustus was to double in size. Then, to the sound of trumpets, the churches were thrown open and the people hastened to offer thanks to the Lord who after a delay of almost thirty years had finally given them a male heir to the Crown.

The Jews of Paris joined the celebration gladly, as they had for centuries in every local demonstration of civic pride. They thronged the Synagogue, and chanted prayers in the dark, passionate music the 12th century adored. In truth, they had reason to hope for the perpetuation of the Capet Dynasty, which now seemed assured by the birth of the baby prince. The Capets had been generous sovereigns. Philip's father and grandfather in particular had shown the Jews a spirit of religious toleration which—although it must not be confused with tolerance in the modern sense—was rare for medieval Europe. The Royal Domain of Ile de France was a haven for the Jew, who since the First Crusade had found himself persecuted throughout the West. The Paris community had not only escaped the bloody Crusader pogroms of the turn of the century; it had also been spared the new wave of anti-Semitic brutality that coincided with the Second Crusade of 1146. As Jews perished in Normandy, the Rhineland, and the distant valley of the Danube, their brethren in Paris had prospered in relative peace.

THE tolerant policy of the Capets had not been entirely disinterested. As France slowly emerged from the chaos of the Dark Age, as life improved and society expanded in every way, as cities grew and population increased, and the arts rose on the great swell of the Romanesque and the Gothic Transition, the presence of the Jewish financier was a necessity. The projects of an

---

IT WAS in the high Middle Ages, at the time of the First Crusade, that Christian Europe launched upon an anti-Semitic course which ultimately drove most of the Jews of the West eastward into the confines of the Russo-Polish Pale. Before that time, in the early Middle Ages, the Jew was a man like any other man, marked out hardly at all from his neighbors, whether in occupation, speech, or dress. Against the vivid tapestry of medieval life and history ALLAN TEMKO shows us these first fateful steps of the European polity along the path of anti-Semitism. Mr. Temko's previous articles in COMMENTARY on medieval Jewish life in France include "The King, the Bishop, and the Jew" (February 1953) and "The Burning of the Talmud in Paris" (May 1954). In the fall Viking Press is bringing out his book, *Notre-Dame of Paris*. A graduate of Columbia, he was born in 1924 in New York City. He has been living in Paris for the past several years, and, among his other activities, has lectured at the Sorbonne.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

age which built dozens of abbeys and cathedrals, and which in a single century flung itself no less than four times against the Moslem East, often required hard money more quickly than the landed wealth of feudalism could provide it. Christians, who were forbidden by the Church to charge interest, were reluctant to make loans on a selfless basis. The Jewish banker, until the rise of the Lombards, had a virtual monopoly.

In spite of his special position in medieval finance, the Jew was never as rich as some have claimed. If he did amass a private fortune, he could not invest it in the major source of feudal wealth: estates worked by bound serfs. Further, in a culture that frequently resorted to force, the position of the Jewish creditor was perilous, since for practical purposes he was denied the use of the sword in retaliation. But this is not the whole story. The Jew was not invariably a moneylender. He practiced crafts as an artisan, sold goods as a merchant, and when he could, farmed and cultivated vines. This alone indicates that he may not have relished the position of usurer which the Christian majority peremptorily tried to assign him. Many Jews and Christians would have crossed professional lines, as indeed the Lombards and Cahorsins did, if the moat of religious difference had not been so deep.

It remains, however, that at a time when liquid wealth was scarce, the Jewish moneylender was called upon to provide it at short notice. He did so, at interest rates that may seem astonishing: as high as 40 or 50 per cent of the principal in twelve months. At the same time—and here his risk should be recalled—he demanded heavy collateral: either a mortgage of property or labor, or the pawn of *objets d'art* for which the museums of the world compete today. No group could have been saddled with the exclusive charge of such dealings without resentment, and through the Middle Age that resentment quivered beneath the fabric of society like a scaly beast which no Saint George has ever finished off. The myths it manufactured still beat about the world, strange tales of sorcery and ritual death whispered by illiterates. In the 12th century the political results of this resentment ended in the expulsion of the Jews from the hitherto friendly Kingdom of France, and the loss of the Paris Synagogue.

TO UNDERSTAND the position of the Jew in Paris in 1165, we must first imagine the medieval city that was spreading to every side, pushing out the limits of the *faubourgs* on either bank so that, when Philip Augustus walled the perimeter from 1190 to 1210, the ramparts enclosed seventy-five thousand people—five times the city's population in the Dark Age. This Paris was still rural, with very much the atmosphere of a country town, and lived on close terms with the surrounding fields and forest of tall oaks. In good weather its gardens, open squares, and magnificent river shore made it a remarkably pleasant place to live. Its odors, like those of villages today where *confort moderne* is unknown, may have been little worse than a farm's. As Lewis Mumford and other observant critics have noted, medieval Paris was scarcely the pool of filth that Victorian scholars described with a shudder. Its baths were used for bathing, and did not become "stews" until the Renaissance.

Intellectually, no city has been more alive. Its schools were the most famous in the Occident, and set the philosophic tone for the entire Middle Age. The "oven," one contemporary called them, in which the world's intellectual bread was baked. Its architecture was, of course, superb. The ordinary homes, to judge from 12th-century houses standing elsewhere, were solidly built, exquisitely decorated, and as well lighted as their designers could make them. Its religious edifices were as lovely as any Western civilization has created.

Bisecting the city in a straight north and south line, splitting it like an apple, was the Roman road: the *vicus magnus* which now has lost almost all but its historical importance, but still crosses Paris in a broad, powerful stroke through the center of the island. In the 12th century, spanning the two channels of the Seine on the Grand and the Petit Pont, it was one of the major arteries of commerce and religion in the world. To the north, as Rue St.-Martin, it led to Amiens and the industries of Flanders. Southward, it was a route of the soul. It belonged to "Monsieur Saint Jacques"—Saint James of Compostella—and for five hundred years was crowded with pilgrims on foot to his magical shrine on the Atlantic coast of Spain. The tiny central stretch of this highway, no more than three hundred yards

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from bridge to bridge on the island, is now called Rue de la Cité. The Middle Age knew it as the Juiverie.

Here, and in the cramped alleys that border the Left Bank opposite, Jews had lived for a full thousand years. Except for a brief exile by King Dagobert in the 7th century, they had resided continuously beside the Seine since, as traders, they had followed Caesar's legions north into Gaul. They had settled early in the splendid Gallo-Roman city of Lutetia, first on the undefended southern shore, and later, when the German tribes threatened, within the fortified Cité; and with the rest of the Roman world, they had suffered the consequences of the barbarian triumph. In the lawless age that followed, the long night of the Merovingians, Jewish fortunes, like those of everyone else, fluctuated with amazing speed and violence. There was the momentary calm of Charlemagne, but in the Norman invasions of the 9th century, and in the baronial anarchy of the 10th and 11th, the Jew suffered again.

THESE misfortunes, it should be emphasized, were largely common ones, shared with the rest of the battered and demoralized population. The view of the Dark Age as an epoch of incessant terror for the Jew must be reconsidered. Rarely, until the later Middle Age, was he singled out as the enemy whose squalid caricature was formalized in the Prioress's Tale. He suffered mistreatment that was at times severe, yet of a sporadic and limited nature. He was subjected to a pariah code that in theory would have made life intolerable, but in practice was often ignored or lightly enforced. One reason for this was that Judaism and Christianity were closer in these early centuries—closer in mood, ritual, and official doctrine—than they have been since. In a world that had not seen the last of paganism, the Jew was after all a monotheistic creature whose sacred books not only held fundamental truth of God the Father, but, to Christian theologians, the most vivid promise of Jesus the Son. Jewish proselytism could, and occasionally did, attract Christian converts. Beyond this, although it would later change, the attitude of Rome was mild. Certain popes, like Saint Gregory the Great, displayed astonishing width of mind in their relations with the Jews. Kings, too, had a tendency to befriend Jews, and establish them at court as physicians, linguists, and caterers of precious stuffs. Charlemagne, typically, included an intriguing figure named Isaac in his diplomatic embassy to Haroun-el-Raschid. He was the only one of the mission to return, with gifts that included an elephant.

As long as the West lay prostrate, as the pulse of trade slackened, and barter clumsily replaced money and banking, when man scratched what living he could from before the encroaching forest, the Jew was externally indistinguishable from the common mass. He spoke the common Roman language which was slowly twisting into French; he dressed without special markings in common fashion; he shared common tastes and habits, including the taste for violence; he lived where he chose, side by side with Christians; and when France began to rally under the Capets, from about the year 1000 on, and moved towards the society that built Vézelay and Chartres, the Jew climbed to a new and better life with the entire nation.

It is interesting to visualize the Juiverie in those expanding times, astride the central trade route that had so long remained inactive. The Ile-de-la-Cité, the kernel of France, was a microcosm of medieval life, divided in equal halves by the busy commercial street. The Synagogue at its center looked out on an unending pageant of pilgrims, merchants, priests, and warriors, nobles who rode on chargers to the Palace, and bishops who led chanting multitudes to the Cathedral. The western end of the Ile was the property of the Capets: the dour feudal castle whose turrets dominated the humble roofs beneath its walls. The eastern end was that mysterious province in which the historian finds it easy to lose his way: the territory of the medieval Church, consecrated with indescribable fervor to Notre Dame. Eventually the street of the business man would widen and branch until it enveloped both Palace and Cathedral, but then the Middle Age would be over, and the Jew would have left his ancient emplacement forever.

TO BELIEVE the chroniclers, however—and it is good to remember that they were Church writers with special causes to plead—the Jews were already doing fabulously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well as businessmen by the middle of the 12th-century. Rigord, a monk of Saint-Denis, asserts flatly that they owned no less than half the dwellings in Paris. Not a single modern historian has believed him. And with reason. The greatest holder of real estate in the capital was easily the Church. The Cathedral alone possessed vast tracts of land and hundreds of buildings within the city proper and outside the walls; the powerful Abbeys of Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Sainte-Geneviève each owned almost as much. When these holdings were added to those of the Crown, there was not much left for anyone else. Perhaps Rigord was speaking of what remained. But even in this case he may have exaggerated. Still, it should be noted that he wrote for contemporaries, and meant to be believed. In any case, his statement leaves no doubt whatever of the economic freedom accorded the Jews by Philip's father, Louis VII, and indicates that they owned a sizable amount of real property in Paris and the vicinity.

It is known, for example, that they held title to their own homes. Most of these houses were in the Juiverie itself, and the adjoining streets. They did not form a solid block, but rather were peppered through the heart of the island in the midst of Christian dwellings whose appearance was no different from their own. Perhaps the community extended westward directly into the protective enclosure of the Palace, where there was a Rue de Jerusalem and another called the Rue de Nazareth. The names, like the names of all medieval streets, may be a clue to the identity of their original residents, but these are more likely to be souvenirs of the Crusades or of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. To the east of the island, residence was closed to Jews by the Cloister of Notre-Dame and other dependencies of the Cathedral.

But by the second half of the 12th century a movement away from Ile-de-la-Cité had already begun among the Jews. The commercial energy of the island was spilling rapidly across the Grand Pont to the recently established Halles on the Right Bank. The Jews quickly saw the future of these great markets, and moved near them; and it is worth remarking that they live by choice in that same neighborhood today. In the bustling area north of the Rue de Rivoli, between the Halles and the Place des Vosges, selling a variety of vivid merchandise, are the Jews who have returned to the same spot after every exile through the centuries, from the expulsion of Philip Augustus to the frightful retreat from Hitler in 1940. The quarter is mistakenly called the "ghetto." There was never an "official" ghetto in Paris; even during the most severe persecutions of the Middle Age and modern times, the Jews have never been confined to one district by law.

On the Left Bank the Jewish community retained some of its ancient character. Beside the Petit Pont were the shops of the spice merchants who since Merovingian days had been *negotiatores* of exotic goods in France: pepper, dates, and silks; aphrodisia and gems. Off Rue Galande, probably well hidden by surrounding structures, was the Jewish cemetery, one of the oldest in northern Europe. And high on the hill of Sainte-Geneviève, where the Faculties stand, were vineyards owned by Jews. Beyond, in the fields, they almost certainly possessed farms.

Did the Jews work their land themselves? The question is open. The indignation of the Church against Jewish use of Christian manual labor indicates that in general they did not. Nevertheless, there was no Christian monopoly on humble toil. Sauval, a 17th-century historian who had recourse to documents and oral traditions now lost, speaks of a class of Jewish "artisans" who lived largely on the Right Bank. Precisely what crafts they followed he does not say, but it might be recalled that in East European nations which remained feudal until modern times, Jews bulked large in skilled labor—as carpenters, shoemakers, and tailors, to name only three *métiers* they could have held in the 12th century, before the guild system had fully developed its mystical Christian emphasis and was closed permanently to them. By Talmudic injunction, Jews operated their own wine-presses, whose existence we know of from documents, and may also have sold their wine commercially. Kosher butchers slaughtered cattle in the Boucherie, and disposed of the forbidden cuts of meat to Christian purchasers. There is another interesting possibility. The Juiverie, in course of time, became known as "the place where bread is baked." True, the earliest references to these bakeries date only

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the 13th century, after the Jews had been expelled and recalled, but they provide a rich source of conjecture. The ovens and wheat market which later became famous seem to have been in operation well before 1200, and already situated in the Juiverie. Jewish bread has always been celebrated, and Jewish bakers may still have been permitted, in the 12th century, to supply it to the entire community.

The size of the Jewish population at this time remains a riddle. When Philip Augustus permitted the Jews to return after sixteen years in exile, forty households, the names of whose heads are known, came back immediately. This means more than forty families. A Jewish household in the Middle Age resembled a small clan, with the families of numerous sons and cousins assembled under a single patriarch. There might have been one hundred such households before the expulsion, whose minor relations and Jewish servants could have brought the total number to two or three thousand. Perhaps twenty-five hundred Jews in a city of seventy-five thousand is not too wild a guess.

These Jews habitually spoke French. They used the national language, as Theodore Reinach pointed out, even for sacred readings of the Pentateuch. And as far as the social organization permitted, they *were* French. They took French family names and soubriquets: Bonnefoy, Bonami, Châtelain; and modified, or translated into French, their Hebrew given names. Isaac thus became Haquin; Joseph, Jossé; Chaim was delightfully rendered Vivant.

Vivant! A lively place, the Juiverie, with all the freshness and vitality of the best moment of the Middle Age. And its life centered in the Synagogue, whose history went back at least six hundred years and possibly much longer. The temple was placed at the exact heart of the island, near the intersection of the Juiverie and the Rue des Marmousets, on the eastern side of the road, midway between the two bridges. Its sanctuary was oriented towards Jerusalem, as Christian shrines were, and did not stand free, but was hemmed on either side by buildings which may have been religious in purpose or simple dwellings. Some nearby structure, if not the Synagogue itself, must have served as a hostel for strangers—a necessity for an age that was always on the move. The Synagogue also must have housed the School, which was a brilliant, if extremely modest, counterpart of the great academic centers of the Church. The Jews of northern France had a rich intellectual tradition whose beginnings lay in the revival of letters at the time of Charlemagne. The School of Paris rivaled those at Troyes and Worms, which were renowned for rabbinical learning. The Doctors of the Paris Synagogue were famous, too, and the chroniclers mention them respectfully. There was no pretension to Latin scholarship of a high order (manuscript glosses, as a rule, were made in purest medieval French), but there was accomplished knowledge of Hebrew. Moreover, Jews were familiar with Greek and Arabic at a time when few Christians could read these crucial scientific languages; and it is significant that mathematics and other sciences from the East, thrice translated from Greek to Arabic to Hebrew to Latin, and ported overland on a long detour through the Spain of Maimonides, arrived in France at the very moment the Gothic began probing heaven with its vaults and spires.

Today, the medieval character of the Juiverie has been destroyed—a victim of Baron Haussmann and the city-planning of the Second Empire. Not one Parisian in a thousand looks up as his autobus passes through Rue de la Cité, and not one in ten thousand is aware that the street was ever called the Juiverie. But on misty nights, when the gas-lamps hover like ghosts in the air, and the towers of Notre-Dame lift against the moon, we may grasp for an instant the beauty that once resided in this place, and the poignancy that shall not return.

Now, as time passes, watch the Cathedral rise. There are few better symbols of the sweep of medieval history than the construction of Notre-Dame. Two years before the birth of Philip Augustus, in 1163, the Parisians had finally entered the great contest of architectural beauty that was taking place everywhere in the Ile de France. They had taken the bold decision to rase and entirely reconstruct their venerable Carlovingian cathedral, now three centuries old and hopelessly out of date for the taste and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

needs of a revived nation. The confining Gallo-Roman rampart was broken through, and a new shrine erected to the Virgin that for its time was the most ambitious monument in Christendom.

For one hundred and fifty years, until the last work was completed early in the 14th century, the Juiverie resounded to the whips of the teamsters driving ox-carts down from the quarries on the Left Bank, across the Petit Pont, and then swinging off to the right on the Rue Neuve Notre-Dame, which Bishop Maurice de Sully had cut through to the Juiverie to facilitate the transport of materials to the tip of the island. The Jews took pride in their city's superb creation. Perhaps, as they did elsewhere, they sent a formal delegation to the laying of the first stone. In any case they marveled with the rest of the Occident at the daring of the high vaults: thirty-two and a half meters above the stone pavements—something more than one hundred and five feet, as against twenty-four meters for Laon and Sens, its nearest rivals. Notre-Dame was the tallest building yet attempted in the West, and the Jews shared its Gothic taste, as they had unforgettably shared the Romanesque at Worms, and were later to adore the Renaissance when they built lavish synagogues in Provence. Beyond this, they were deeply interested—in the French sense of *interêt*—in the success of the project.

A GLANCE at the choir of Notre-Dame reveals the enormous common effort required to construct it in less than twenty years, from 1163 to 1182: precisely the moment of Jewish history that concerns us. To equip such a structure with stained glass, tapestries, and carvings, employing only the finest workmanship and materials, made a demand on the Cathedral treasure that even its vast resources could not meet. The Gothic cathedrals were not financed by the sale of indulgences; Saint Peter's of Rome and Prince Tetzel belong to an altogether different world of the spirit as well as of art. There were the offerings of the great and the humble, true, but in the main the Bishop drew on his legitimate revenues from fiefs that stretched to every part of the kingdom, to Champagne, Brittany, and Poitou. The Cathedral controlled dozens of towns and smaller communities, several immense forests, innumerable fields, mills, and granaries that in good years would show a handsome profit. In lean years the feudal economy was paralyzed, and the Bishop was forced to borrow. As collateral, he did not hesitate to pawn the jewels and altar vessels of his church.

A curious piece of evidence reveals that Bishop Maurice de Sully entered into such dealings with the bankers of the Juiverie. In the midst of the popular enthusiasm for the Gothic a few lonely and angry voices arose. A generation earlier, Saint Bernard had attacked the Romanesque with all his caustic genius. Now, in the Chapter of the Cathedral of Paris, a theologian named Pierre le Chantre castigated the Gothic. In his *Summa Ecclesiastica*, composed shortly after 1180, he speaks of the "disease of building"—*morbus aedificandi*—which had seized France. "To construct as is done at present is to sin," he went on bitterly: "churches should be humble . . . but today they are built higher and higher." If there were any doubt about what he was referring to, Pierre soon made it clear that he had his own cathedral and bishop in mind. He questions the necessity of luxurious episcopal residences, and all of Paris knew that Bishop Maurice was simultaneously building a palace as well as a cathedral. This is one hint. But then Pierre has a few words on the financing of church construction: ". . . cathedrals are built nowadays with the usury of avarice (*usuris avarorum*), with lies of deception and the deception of liars, preachers, and mercenaries; and these evilly acquired resources shall bring their ruin. . . ." Maurice de Sully was a celebrated preacher; his sermons were famous throughout Europe. He also had a certain reputation as a skillful talker in negotiations which Pierre le Chantre, as an official of the Chapter, had reason to know.

If this were not proof enough, there is another fascinating manuscript which confirms the quarrel of Pierre and Bishop Maurice. This account is attributed to Caesarius of Heisterbach, a completely different sort of writer, whose anecdotes are pure medieval delight. According to Caesarius, after Maurice had spent all of his own moneys on the still unfinished structure (*structuram operis inchoati*), he obtained *plurimas infinitasque pecunias ex usuris*—varied and limitless funds from moneylend-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers. Maurice seems not to have had a troubled conscience. He proceeded to erect the nave which is even more mighty and splendid than the choir, and when he died in 1196, the great central vessel of Notre-Dame was virtually completed.

THE drama was building, in the carved rock of the Cathedral. About 1170, two of its leading characters sat for their portraits in stone. In the tympanum of the Portail Sainte-Anne, to either side of one of the most majestic Virgins of the Middle Age, a bishop stands, and a king kneels. The bishop is Maurice de Sully in vigorous middle life: bearded, staunch, capable; visibly that gifted and ambitious son of peasants which we know him to be. His pontifical robes are magnificent—they rival the Byzantine gown of the Virgin!—but we are drawn to the figure of the king. His very foot speaks. Never has royalty been depicted with such grace and idealism. Excessively idealized, a captious critic might add. Yet the characterization is not exaggerated. The man is very nearly a religious fanatic. He has often knelt barefoot—here, at the doors of the Cathedral—begging forgiveness for real or imagined offenses against the Lord. The gorgeously pleated folds of his penitent's gown and cloak must be laid to the charge of the sculptor, for this king meant them to be models of austerity. The same must be said for the beautifully trimmed beard and elaborate coiffure which so lightly supports the crown. As no other King of France, except his great-grandson Saint Louis, he is the "eldest son of the Church"—Defender of the Faith, but a very poor Protector of the Realm.

He is Louis VII, father of Philip Augustus, fifty years old if it is actually 1170, with a decade of life ahead. He is no longer Louis le Jeune, the chivalrous hothead who took the throne at seventeen, the bridegroom of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who divorced her (together with half his kingdom) after his disastrous expedition to the Holy Land; and who since has become Louis the Pious, a royal mystic, a sovereign who more than any diversion prefers vespers in the new Cathedral, when the afternoon sun lights the glass, and the music of the choir soars and mingles with the rising lines of the architecture.

The intervention of the Papacy alone saved France from ruin during his last years. To the east, the Empire threatened Champagne and Burgundy, and crossed the breadth of Provence to command the Rhone at Arles. On his western flank, Henry Plantagenet—Henry II of England, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, Count of Anjou—had acquired territory that Philip Augustus would spend a lifetime recovering by force of arms. The Capets ruled a narrow strip of central France from Paris to Bourges; Amiens, Rouen, Tours and Poitiers were lost; Bordeaux would not be recovered for centuries, and retains a certain English character to this day.

The people, with their growing sense of patriotism, looked to the young Prince Philip. Charming stories were told of his precocity. At the age of four he was presented, in the field, to Henry of England, who with poor grace spoke a few words to him and prepared to gallop away. The child called him back, and with the courtesy which seems to have belonged to the Gothic age alone, beseeched the powerful monarch "to love his father, France, and himself—Philip, and so obtain the grace of God and men." A few years later, when he was nine, the prince calmly announced that one day he would retake the stronghold of Gisors in the Vexin, at the gates of the Royal Domain, which his father had foolishly given up to Henry. Then, in 1179, Louis suffered a paralytic stroke. He lingered another year, but Philip had been already anointed and crowned at Rheims, and at the age of fourteen was in fact the King of France.

PHILIP'S first important act, eight months before the death of his father, was to move dramatically against the Jews. On a Sabbath morning in February, 1180, royal sergeants entered the synagogues and seized every Jewish man, woman, and child in the kingdom. The arrest was brutal. They were stripped of their "gold, silver, and clothing"—which included the lovely Syrian prayer shawls we see in cathedral sculptures—"as they themselves stripped the Egyptians before their departure." The secret of the *coup* seems to have been carefully guarded. The chroniclers speak of no spectacular escapes, no favored exceptions. This reversal of the time-honored Capetian policy of tolerance was totally unexpected.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In modern times it has become a fashion for new regimes immediately to stage theatrical effects; the death of a medieval king could alter the face of a nation in a matter of days. Both past and present, however, new rulers who feel themselves vulnerable have usually obeyed what they interpret to be the popular will. Here the boy king and his advisors, to believe the chronicles, appear to have been on safe ground. The monk Rigord and other eulogists indicate that the Christian masses—on whom Philip had to rely if he were to survive—were solidly behind the move.

Were they, truly? Prejudice—strong prejudice—existed without question. Until this stroke of demagogy, its local degree of intensity at Paris was a matter of doubt. The absence of anti-Semitic violence in the capital was notorious to contemporary bigots. On the other hand, the explosions of religious hatred that shook the entire West during the First and Second Crusades were not created out of the air. The word "Jew" had been used as a Christian insult before the fall of Rome. And although the Royal Domain of France had been spared Crusader butcheries, the great feudal provinces had not. News of outbreaks filtered into Paris from Normandy, Touraine, and Champagne, together with myths of witchcraft. These were sensationalized by itinerant preachers, enlarged by popular ignorance, and inflamed by national misfortune until, by the closing years of the 12th century, the common picture of the Jew had been unrecognizably transformed.

In 1171 a tale of ritual murder in France electrified the realm. A small boy, drowned in the Loire, was reported to have been first tormented and then cast in the river by the Jews of Blois. The Count of Blois promptly burned alive fifty-one unfortunates—the entire Jewish population of the city. The tales quickly multiplied. Easter was conceded to be the season when Jews particularly relished the blood of Gentile children, but any other Christian holiday would do almost as well. Then, in 1179, as old Louis VII lay dying, the body of young Richard of Pontoise—one of the most venerated corpses of the Middle Age—was added to the list of victims.

Pontoise is only twenty miles from Paris, and was too small a community to retain such a relic. The dead child was transported to the capital, and placed in the chapel of the cemetery of the Holy Innocents (medieval theologists could find a Biblical analogy for any occasion) and his tomb became a center of pilgrimage. His passion was recorded in stained glass, in stone, in songs to which Chaucer listened. For centuries, too, the gateway of the burial ground would carry an inscription which read: "Beware of a Jew, a madman, and a leper." Prince Philip, himself a child and in danger, was singularly moved by the superstitious tale.

THE bishops said little, but to some extent the highest quarters of the Church were to be blamed for this state of affairs. Since the declamations of Agobard in the 9th century, whom Cecil Roth has termed the "father of medieval anti-Semitism," the attitude of Rome had deteriorated. The pagan had vanished, and the infidel had become the foremost living source of Christian doubt. The Saracen, of course, was Satan. Because of the joint Judeo-Christian heritage the position of the Jew was less clear.

In general, the great prelates of the century had been disposed to believe in the possibility of Jewish salvation. When Innocent II visited Saint-Denis in 1131, and the Jews of Paris took part in his welcome by presenting him with a Torah, the Pope accepted the scroll with some grace. Then, reflecting as he removed the embroidered silks which protected the parchment, he expressed the wish that Almighty God might eventually lift the veil of disbelief from their hearts. Saint Bernard—the soul of the Church Universal—had intervened when the mobs of Crusaders were gathering, and spoken with all his unique force against bloodshed. The Saint agreed that the Jew must wander and suffer as an outcast for his sins, but he demanded Christian justice on earth for a fellow child of the Lord. But the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, held a less lofty view, which the clergy as a whole adopted after the death of Bernard. "*Exsecrandi et odio habendi sunt Judaei, non ut occidantur admoneo,*" he thundered: Hate and execrate, but do not slay them. An age that reached for the sword continually could not distinguish between one and the other.

When anti-Jewish feeling was at its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

height, Rome aggravated the situation. The Lateran Council of 1179—the year when the incident at Pontoise horrified Christendom—decided to clarify the status of the Jew so that it would never again be questioned. The contamination was to be removed by making him untouchable. All the random proscriptions of the Dark Age were gathered together and codified, preparing the way for the Council of 1215, which in turn led directly to the Inquisition, the ghetto, and the marked costume. When Louis VII did not instantly comply with the decisions of the Council, Alexander III wrote him stinging letters. But the aged king could not easily change the habits of a lifetime. One of his last acts was to confirm the rights of Jews, through their own bailiffs, to collect debts legitimately owed them.

PHILIP'S *razzia* against the Jews, then, served a double political purpose. It ingratiated him with Pope Alexander, giving the French crown an even closer bond with the most precious ally in Europe: for the Holy See's moral prestige was worth a dozen armies. At the same time he established a base of popular enthusiasm for his reign, which in the form of a French national army would break down the walls of Château Gaillard, take Normandy, Anjou, and Touraine, and on the plain of Bouvines vanquish the combined armies of Germany and Flanders. Foot-sergeants and crossbowmen were to do more to gain his victories than mounted chevaliers.

Philip's biographer, Rigord, strangely lists neither of these motives. The monk has five reasons of his own. First, there was the abnormal freedom of the Jews in France, a situation crying for correction. Then there were those abominable murders in subterranean caverns at Easter, deliberately perpetrated at this time to outrage Christians in mourning for the Crucifixion. The last three reasons are really one: the financial standing of the Parisian Jews.

Rigord asserts that not only did the Jews own half the dwellings in the city and surrounding country, but that every class of society was in debt to them—bourgeois, peasants, soldiers. Those who could not pay, the monk adds, were confined to debtors' prisons which he says were located in the usurers' homes, private jails in which Christians were held by sacred oath if not by actual iron bars. Next came a charge of profanation of liturgical articles placed in pawn by the clergy: Jewish babies drank wine from chalices, and dipped their cakes in them. But—and here is the final reason—the Jews, fearing a search for these holy vessels, had hidden a golden, jeweled crucifix, an Evangile encrusted with gems, and various silver cups and sacramental vases—in a latrine! Divine revelation (*Domino revelante*) led Christians to the place of concealment, and these sullied treasures were restored to the Church.

All this is curious, coming from a Church writer, in view of what we know of the indebtedness of the Cathedral of Paris to the Juiverie. Saint-Denis, Rigord's own abbey, also had a long-standing association with the moneylenders, and we may assume that other monasteries—Saint-Germain-des-Prés, for example, which like Saint-Denis had recently rebuilt its abbey church—had similar obligations. To be rid of the Jews was to be rid of these debts.

THE Jews did not long remain imprisoned. They were allowed almost immediately to ransom their persons and their seized belongings for fifteen thousand marks payable to the Crown. The sum has little meaning today, but its enormity may be appreciated by what it could buy in kind. Fifteen thousand marks was enough to purchase a small barony. Indeed, two decades later, when Philip Augustus was conquering Normandy with his exchequer as well as his troops, he bought the lands and castle of a minor lord for just half that amount: fifteen thousand pounds—since a mark was commonly worth two pounds or *livres parisis*.

For comparison with modern values, however, less lordly purchases may be more to the point. A fine residence cost one hundred fifty to two hundred *livres*, complete with gardens. But a solid dwelling could easily be found for a third as much—forty-six *livres*, to name a typical price. Keeping this in mind, if we were to estimate the value of a first-rate medieval home as ten thousand dollars of our money, and translate this conservatively as one hundred *livres*, the Jews were assessed the round equivalent of $3,000,000.

This extortion replenished the Royal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Treasure, which had been low. The Jews were freed, and may have been looking forward to a new period of calm. The usual technique in the Middle Age was to permit the magical goose to fatten.

Then an odd incident occurred. In the Bois de Vincennes, on the eastern edge of Paris, a colony of hermits had been set up that resembled the visionary settlement in the Thebaid. The Bois are a short bus ride from the heart of the city today; in the Middle Age they were reached after a pleasant walk. The woods were thick enough to give the impression of wildness, but not so menacing as to scare off visitors; and the Parisians, when they wished a dream interpreted or a special prayer said, or advice on any subject, would go to the isolated cells of the monks and ask for counsel. The holy men did not refuse, nor did they expect reward, for in the words of Anatole France: *"ces moines méprisaient les richesses et l'odeur de leurs vertus montait jusqu'au ciel."* The most famous of these oracles, today almost forgotten, was Pierre Bernard de Bré, or du Coudrai, known to the people simply as Frère Bernard. One day in 1180 Philip rode out to the Bois to consult him on the Jewish problem.

For a man removed from the world, the recluse had a rather worldly answer. He advised the King to liberate his subjects from their debts, except for one-fifth of the principal—the monk stipulated the percentage—to be paid directly to the Crown. Philip carried out these instructions as they were given.

Two years then passed, swiftly and in silence in Rigord's chronicle, painfully slow for the Jews who awaited Philip's next step. It was extreme. In the spring of 1182, whether on Frère Bernard's advice is unknown, the King decided on banishment from the realm. He gave the Jews three months, from April to July, to sell their household affairs, livestock, and furniture. All larger property—lands, houses, vineyards, barns, wine-presses—was confiscated outright by the Crown.

Under the threat of exile, Rigord says, several Jews were converted to Christianity and stayed. How many did this is open to conjecture. Probably very few indeed. A converted Jew's property—because it was invariably assumed by law to have been amassed in sin—was seized in any case by the Crown so that he could begin life again on an "honest" basis. If a convert were accused and convicted of reversion to former business practices, he was put to death under torture.

Some Jews attempted a classic evasion: bribery in high places. Nobles and clergymen interceded, but Philip remained firm in spite of strong persuasion. Later, emperors and popes were to be astonished by his same stubborn attachment to a preconceived plan. Such perseverance was an anomaly in the Middle Age, when motives vanished as rapidly as they appeared, even in art, which clung to the times like a gorgeous burr.

In the end Philip outlasted all his enemies, and died at the head of a nation which, architecturally if not politically, deserves more than the name Augustan. None of the immense cathedrals that went up during his reign—Chartres, Bourges, Rheims, Amiens—carries his image; and all we have are the chroniclers' descriptions of the mature warrior, bald and sinewy as Caesar; but deeds reveal this man, as they do few others. Stubborn, but amazingly supple; cynical, wily, hard-fisted, but personally brave; a diplomatist of great skill, but scarcely literate; nominally devout, pious on occasion, but nevertheless the Crusader who abandoned Richard Coeur-de-Lion, to return and war on his ally's domains; unscrupulous to excess for an unscrupulous age, and brutal for a brutal age, plucking out eyes and breaking bones—yet withal so capable, so clearly intelligent, so attractive when he cared to be, that it is understandable why his contemporaries called him *li grans roys Phelippes*—the great King Philip.

In July 1182, he gave the final order, and all the Jews of the kingdom, with their wives, children, and retainers, carrying what baggage they could, crossed the frontiers of France. Where did they go? Most probably to the civilized south, to the protection of the brilliant and heretical court of Toulouse, and the great mercantile cities of Narbonne and Béziers, where the classic souvenir of Rome had never been completely lost, and where many of them eventually would be put to the sword along with the Albigensians in Simon de Montfort's crusade. Others went to the Rhineland, scattering eastward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Prague. Not many could have wished to go far. The majority remained close to the borders of France, waiting to see if the seventeen-year-old King would relent, hoping he could not do without them—and finally he could not. But it would be sixteen years before his self-interest called them back.

THE Juiverie lay empty. The Synagogue was deserted, defiled, stripped of its riches. It is an eerie moment to enter this vanished temple, for it represents a limbo between epochs. Life in Western Europe would never be quite the same, for Christian no less than Jew, from this time on.

In basic design, the Synagogue was austere. It was a long, slender room no more than twenty by ninety feet—small, but in the class of Worms and Prague. A single portal opened on the Juiverie. Perhaps there were other entrances; there is no way of knowing. All of our information comes from the period after it was ceded to the Church, when it was rebuilt and utterly transformed.

This much may be said, however, from what has been learned of medieval synagogues in general. The exterior, like protective coloration, was extremely plain, perhaps to the point of rudeness. The Jew throughout the Middle Age took care to show only his most prosaic self, or more accurately, to conceal his special poetry. This was necessary, if one wished to retain his own poetry at all. A Jewish temple that stood higher than a neighboring church might be seized for that reason alone. Even for chants to be overheard in the street outside was enough to cost a congregation its place of worship.

But if God were missing from the hostile streets, he compensated the Jews with a pure concentration of divinity within the tabernacle. The interior was pure splendor. Few Gods have been more dazzling than the Jewish Lord of the Middle Age. He ruled with an intoxicating, semi-Oriental force, and demanded emotional psalms and ecstasies. Like the contemporary Christian God, he appreciated ingenious theologians. His sanctuary was decorated with silks and precious woods, and mosaics that had a look of Byzantium, and was lighted with hundreds of burning lamps. The emotion of the medieval Synagogue is lost now, as lost as that of the medieval Church. Men, we say, have grown more reasonable, like their art, in which we are hard-pressed to find a trace of divinity. To guess at what the modern world has lost, we need only look at the northern door of the façade of Notre-Dame. There, beneath a monumental Triumph of the Virgin, sit three Prophets and three Kings, on either side of a Gothic Ark of the Covenant. All six figures are remarkable for their serenity, a grave handsome calm that belongs to the years shortly after 1200, but the three Prophets are particularly impressive. Sitting on a low bench, separated from each other by a graceful colonnade, they might have posed expressly in the Synagogue. The eye is taken with the scholarly, altogether civilized faces, and then loses its way in the lovely folds of their robes.

If the religion was defiantly Semitic, and mysteriously Eastern in tone, it had all the new artistic resources of the West at its disposal. The Synagogue of Paris had magnificent sculpture, like the Romanesque capitals that were lost when Nazi vandals destroyed the incomparable monument at Worms. It had the pure blue stained glass of the 12th century, like the windows that existed in the temple at London. True, there were no recognizable human images. That would have smacked of idolatry, and the rival faith. But there were regal lions of Judah, eagles, peacocks, flowers, and innumerable carved and painted abstractions that had no significance beyond their capacity to enchant.

This was the Synagogue which now lay vacant for a year, from July of 1182 to some time between spring and autumn in 1183, while the King deliberated whether the exile were permanent. Then came the pronouncement that put an end to Jewish life where it had flourished for centuries: *In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, Amen. We Philip, by grace of God King of the Franks . . . concede to the hand of Maurice, the venerable Bishop of Paris, the synagogue of the Jews of Paris, in which they prayed, to build a church there. . . .*

A NUMBER of other blows came at the same time. Twenty-four Jewish houses were given to the Cloth Merchants, on the street near the Synagogue, which thenceforth became known as the Rue des Drapiers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philip Augustus did not, as might be expected, part with these homes gratuitously; he demanded a quit-rent of one hundred pounds. On another street in the Cité, which received the name of Rue des Pelletiers, he gave a number of Jewish dwellings to the Furriers. Gradually, in a series of acts, the former Jewish properties were sold, rented, or presented outright to retainers as reward for services. Fields, vineyards, wine-presses all found their way into Christian hands, and the pattern was repeated throughout the kingdom.

When the Jews were recalled to France in 1198, it was to live on a totally different basis. They became indirect taxers of the population—"a sponge," one historian has written, "which was allowed to swell only to be repeatedly wrung dry." Existence ceased to be not only free but dignified, and was conducted in new quarters. In Paris, the Jews did not return to the island. They chose the Right Bank instead, and built a temple there, but it was not the same. The 13th century brought the marked costume and headdress, and an intensification of the pariah code. The next generation of Jews lived to see the Talmud publicly burned in Paris,* the most dramatic of a chain of disasters that ended in a permanent expulsion in 1394. Only the French Revolution would make Paris habitable for Jews again.

In the meantime Bishop Maurice de Sully had consecrated the Synagogue to Saint Mary Magdalene, and this is the first church of the Madeleine that we know in Paris, a strange ancestor for the monument now so perfectly at home in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. As the years passed it was rebuilt again and again, so that not only its Jewish but its medieval character vanished. It became, too, a sort of upper-class church, the seat of the most powerful Guild Corporation of Paris—"la Grande Confrérie Notre-Dame"—which controlled mercantile life in the capital. Joinville worshipped there, strolling over from the Palace when he was not closeted with Saint Louis. Then came the Renaissance, and the Madeleine was enlarged and decorated in the new taste. Finally, in the furious moment of 1793, it was entered by the People and destroyed.

Destroyed, but not altogether. A few wretches lived in the ruins half a century longer, until the Second Empire rased what was left to make way for the Hospital of the Hôtel-Dieu. The Juiverie, too, lost its name and all else that the Middle Age had given it except when the rain falls, or the moon passes from a cloud, and like any neutral street it is struck with what is lovely and natural.

*See this writer's account of that event in COMMENTARY of May 1954.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AMERICA'S NEW RELIGIOUSNESS

A Way of Belonging or the Way of God?

WILL HERBERG

JUDAISM and Christianity are two religions sharing a common faith. This Jewish-Christian faith is God-centered, holding that all being finds its beginning and its end in God, and its unity, reality, and order in its ordination to Him. Jewish-Christian faith sees man's proper life as that of responsive love of God and hence love of fellow man. But it also knows that man's actual life is corrupted by self-love. We are always prone to idolize ourselves and our works, to attribute final significance to our own interests, ideas, and institutions. Sinful egocentricity invades all areas of life, not excepting the religious. Man is *homo religiosus*, by "nature" religious. He is always striving to find a larger whole transcending the self in which to ground the meaning and security of existence; he is always searching for some god and some way of salvation from the fears, futilities, and frustrations of life.

But—and this is the challenging word of Jewish-Christian faith—so long as he pursues this search in reliance on his own virtue, wisdom, or piety, it will not be God that he finds, but an idol—the self, or some aspect of the self, writ large, projected, objectified, and worshiped. "There is nothing in the Bible to support the view that religion is necessarily a good thing. Scripture has no axe to grind for religion; on the contrary, it is highly suspicious of much that passes for religion," A. Roy Eckhardt has noted. "Religion qua religion," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "is naturally idolatrous, accentuating rather than diminishing the self-worship of men, [institutions] and nations by assuring them of an ultimate sanction for their dearest desires. . . . Religion per se and faith per se are not virtues, or a cause of virtue. The question is always what the object of worship is, and whether the worship tends to break the pride of the self so that a truer self may arise, either individually or collectively."

The ambivalence of religion extends to the church and synagogue. In the temporal, institutional sense, church and synagogue are human and subject to all of the temptations and corruptions of human institutions. Indeed, precisely because in the church and synagogue man confronts God in a quite unique way, they may well become the "final battleground between God and man's self-esteem" (Reinhold Niebuhr), where "the hostility of men against God is brought to a head" (Karl Barth).

Religion, then, is an ambiguous and doubtful thing, requiring careful scrutiny on the part of the man of faith. And what is true of religion in general is particularly true of religion in contemporary America, where the great and almost unprecedented upsurge of religiosity under way today stems from so many diverse sources and manifests itself in so many contradictory forms.

I

THE outstanding feature of the religious situation in America today, as we have seen in my previous article ("The 'Triple Melting Pot,'" August), is the pervasiveness of religious self-identification along the tri-

---

ONE of the most striking developments on the mid-20th-century American social scene is that of religion—perhaps never before, writes WILL HERBERG, has religion enjoyed such influence and esteem. Yet there are aspects of this revival which lead Mr. Herberg to ask if religion has not been rather seriously misunderstood in America. This article, like Mr. Herberg's previous one in our August issue, is taken from *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, to be published by Doubleday in the fall. Both articles are copyright (1955) by Will Herberg.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

partite scheme of Protestant, Catholic, Jew. This transformation of the "land of immigrants" into a "triple melting pot" of three great communities defining three great "communions" or "faiths" has been greatly furthered by what may be called the dialectic of "third-generation interest": the third generation, coming into its own with the cessation of mass immigration, tries to recover its "heritage," so as to give itself some sort of "name," or context of self-identification and social location, in the larger society. "What the son wishes to forget"—so runs "Hansen's Law"—"the grandson wishes to remember." But what he can "remember" is obviously not his grandfather's foreign language, or even his grandfather's foreign culture; it is rather his grandfather's *religion*—America does not demand of him the abandonment of the ancestral religion as it does of the ancestral language and culture. This religion he now "remembers" in a form suitably "Americanized," and yet in a curious way also "retraditionalized." Within this comprehensive framework of basic sociological change operate those inner factors making for a "return to religion" which so many observers have noted in recent years—the collapse of all secular securities in the historical crisis of our time, the quest for a recovery of meaning in life, the new search for inwardness and personal authenticity amid the collectivistic heteronomies of the present.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION in religious terms makes for religious belonging in a more directly institutional way, impelling one to institutional affiliation. These tendencies are reinforced by external and conformist pressures, which today increasingly require religious identification and association with some church. Thus a pattern of religious conformism develops, most pronounced, perhaps, among the younger, "modern-minded" inhabitants of Suburbia, but rapidly spreading to all sections of the American people.

Not to be—that is, not to identify oneself and be identified as—either a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew is somehow not to be an American. It may imply being foreign, as is the case when one professes oneself a Buddhist, a Moslem, or anything but a Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, even when one's Americanness is otherwise beyond question. Or it may imply being obscurely "un-American," as is the case with those who declare themselves atheists, agnostics, or even "humanists." Sidney H. Scheuer, a leading Ethical Culturist, stated recently: "There is a tendency to regard all people who are not committed to one of the three great faiths as being disloyal to American principles and traditions." To be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew are today the alternative ways of being an American.

This religious normality implies a certain religious unity in terms of a common "American religion" of which each of the three great religious communions is regarded as an equal and legitimate expression. The Protestant, the Catholic, and the Jew may each regard his own "faith" as the best or even the truest, but unless he is a theologian or affected with a special theological interest, he will quite "naturally" look upon the other two as sharing with his communion a common "spiritual" foundation of basic "ideals and values"—the chief of these being religion itself. America thus has its underlying culture-religion—best understood as the religious aspect of the American Way of Life—of which the three conventional religions are somehow felt to be appropriate manifestations and expressions. "Recognition of the Supreme Being," President Eisenhower declared early in 1955 in his address launching the American Legion's "Back to God" campaign, "is the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism. Without God, there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life."

The religious unity of American life implies an institutional and ideological pluralism. The American system is one of stable coexistence of three equal religious communities grounded in the common culture-religion of America. Within this common framework there is persistent tension and conflict, reflecting the corporate anxieties and minority-group defensiveness of each of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

three communities. To mitigate these tensions and prevent the conflicts from becoming too destructive, American experience has brought forth the characteristically American device of "interfaith," which, as idea and movement, has permeated broad areas of national life. Interfaith is the religiously oriented civic cooperation of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews to bring about better mutual understanding and to promote enterprises and causes of common concern. The interfaith movement is not secularistic or indifferentist but in its own way quite religious, a joint enterprise of representative men and women of the three religious communities. Interfaith is thus the highest expression of religious coexistence and cooperation within the American understanding of religion.

II

THE new status of religion as a basic form of American "belonging," along with other factors tending in the same direction, has led to the virtual disappearance of anti-religious prejudice, once by no means uncommon in our national life. The old-time "village atheist" is a thing of the past, a curiosity like the town crier; Clarence Darrow, the last of the "village atheists" on a national scale, has left no successors. The present generation can hardly understand the vast excitement stirred up in their day by the "atheists" and "iconoclasts" who vied for public attention less than half a century ago, or imagine the brash militancy of the "rationalist" movements and publications now almost extinct.

Yet it is only too evident that the religiousness characteristic of America today is very often a religiousness without religion, with little content or none, a way of sociability or "belonging" rather than a way of reorienting life to God.* It is thus very frequently a religiousness without serious commitment, without real inner conviction, wtihout genuine existential decision. What should reach down to the core of existence, shattering and renewing, merely skims the surface of life, and yet succeeds in generating the feeling of being religious. Religion thus becomes a kind of protection the self throws up against the radical demand of faith.

Where religiousness is a matter of mere conformity, the discrepancy becomes even more serious. The "other-directed" man or woman is eminently religious in the sense of being religiously identified and affiliated. But what can the other-directed man or woman make of the prophets and the prophetic faith of the Bible, in which the religion of the church he joins is at least officially grounded? The very notion of being "singled out," of standing "over against" the world, is deeply repugnant to one for whom well-being means conformity and adjustment. Religion is valued as conferring a sense of sociability and "belonging," a sense of being really and truly *of* the world and society; how can the other-directed man then help but feel acutely uncomfortable with a kind of religion—for that is what Biblical faith is—which is a declaration of permanent resistance to the heteronomous claims of so-

*The contentlessness of American religion is curiously illustrated by the confessions of faith of a hundred "thoughtful men and women in all walks of life" in the volume *This I Believe*, edited by Edward R. Murrow. As one reads these statements, perplexity grows. The great majority of the hundred men and women who present their "philosophies of life" are unquestionably professed Christians or Jews, yet barely half of them find it necessary so much as to mention God, and only ten make reference to their formal religious beliefs. These eminent citizens proclaim their faith in many and diverse things—in "brotherhood," "service," "idealism," and "spiritual values," in "life," "reason," and "tolerance," in "freedom," "self-reliance," "democracy," and, of course, in "faith"—but only incidentally, if at all, in God. Not that they do not believe in God; of course they do—between 95 and 98 per cent of the American people, surveys show, cherish this belief. But somehow their belief in God, and the God they believe in, do not seem to be central to whatever it was that they had in mind when they stood up to tell the world "This I Believe." The popularity of the radio program conducted by Mr. Murrow, and the praise and applause it has received from all quarters, religious and secular, lay and clerical, would seem to indicate that this kind of religiousness is accepted as quite normal and proper by Americans concerned with religion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ciety, community, culture, and cult? The other-directed man, no matter how religious, simply cannot understand an Elijah or an Amos, a Jesus or an Isaiah; nor can he conceivably feel any warmth of admiration for these "zealots of the Lord." Zeal, nonconformity, uncompromising witness are so "unsociable," so terribly "unadjusted"! The very purpose of the other-directed man's built-in radar apparatus is to protect him against such perils; it protects him so well that it makes the prophetic faith of the Bible almost unintelligible to him. It is thus not too much of a paradox to assert that many of the inner-directed "unbelievers" of the 19th century in a sense stood closer to, or at least less distant from, authentic Biblical faith than do so many of the religious people of our time, whose religion comes to them as an aspect of other-directed conformism and sociability.

EQUALLY dubious from the standpoint of Jewish-Christian faith is that aspect of the present religious situation which makes religion in America so thoroughly American. On the one side, this means that no taint of foreignness any longer adheres to the three great American "faiths." Catholics, Jews, Lutherans, and others, who remember how formidable an obstacle to the preservation and communication of their faith the taint of foreignness once was, will not be altogether ungrateful for this development. And all Americans may be thankful for the new spirit of freedom and tolerance in religious life that the emergence of the tripartite system of three great "religions of democracy" has engendered; it makes increasingly difficult the sinister fusion of religious prejudice with racist or nationalist chauvinism. But on the other side, the "Americanization" of religion has meant a distinct loss of the sense of religious uniqueness and universality: each of the three "faiths," insofar as the mass of its adherents are concerned, tends to regard itself as merely an alternative and variant form of being religious in the American way. This is true even of rank-and-file American Catholics, whose official theology places the strongest possible emphasis on the uniqueness and universality of the Roman Catholic Church as the "one true church"; this is true even of the vast majority of American Jews, who possess so pronounced a sense of worldwide Jewish kinship. The common ground between Judaism and Christianity, and on another level between Protestantism and Catholicism, is real and important, sufficiently real and important, indeed, to make it possible to speak significantly of Jewish-Christian faith in a way that no one could conceivably speak of Jewish-Buddhist or Christian-Hindu faith; yet the very existence of this common ground makes the unique and distinctive witness of each communion, even the advocacy of universal claims where such are felt to be justified, all the more necessary for the life of faith. Insofar as the "Americanness" of religion in America blunts this sense of uniqueness and universality, and converts the three religious communions into variant expressions of American spirituality (just as the three religious communities are understood to be three subdivisions of American society), the authentic character of Jewish-Christian faith is falsified, and the faith itself reduced to the status of an American culture-religion.

It will be recalled that President Eisenhower declared "recognition of the Supreme Being" to be "the first, the most basic expression," not of our historical religions, although undoubtedly Mr. Eisenhower would agree that they are, but of . . . *Americanism.* Americanism thus has its religious creed, evoking the appropriate religious emotions; it may, in fact, be properly characterized as the civic religion of the American people.

But civic religion has always meant the sanctification of the society and culture of which it is the reflection, and that is one of the reasons why Jewish-Christian faith has always regarded such religion as incurably idolatrous. Civic religion validates culture and society without bringing either under judgment. It lends an ultimate sanction to culture and society by assuring them that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they constitute an unequivocal expression of "spiritual ideals" and "religious values." Religion becomes, in effect, the cult of culture and society, in which the "right" social order and the received cultural values are divinized by being identified with the divine purpose. Any issue of *Christian Economics*, any pronouncement of such organizations as Spiritual Mobilization, will provide sufficient evidence of how Christian faith can be used to sustain the civic religion of "laissez-faire capitalism." Similar material from Catholic and Jewish sources comes easily to hand, from "liberal" quarters as well as from "conservative." On this level at least, the new religiosity pervading America seems to be very largely the religious validation of the social patterns and cultural values associated with the American Way of Life.

In a more directly political sense, this religiosity very easily comes to serve as a spiritual reinforcement of national self-righteousness and a spiritual authentication of national self-will. Americans possess a passionate awareness of their power and of the justice of the cause in which it is employed. The temptation is therefore particularly strong to identify the American cause with the cause of God, and to convert our immense and undeniable moral superiority over Communist tyranny into pretensions to unqualified wisdom and virtue. In these circumstances, it would seem to be the office of prophetic religion to raise a word of warning against inordinate national pride and self-righteousness as bound to lead to moral confusion, political irresponsibility, and the darkening of counsel. But the contemporary religious mood is very far indeed from such prophetic transcendence. Aside from occasional pronouncements by a few theologians or theologically-minded clergymen, religion in America seems to possess little capacity for rising above the relativities and ambiguities of the national consciousness and bringing to bear the judgment of God upon the nation and its ways. The identification of religion with the national purpose is almost inevitable in a situation in which religion is so frequently felt to be a way of American "belonging." In its crudest form, this identification of religion with national purpose generates a kind of national messianism which sees it as the vocation of America to bring the American Way of Life, compounded almost equally of democracy and free enterprise, to every corner of the globe; in more mitigated versions, it sees God as the champion of America, endorsing American purposes and sustaining American might.* The God of judgment has died," to quote A. Roy Eckardt again.

Insensibly, this fusion of religion with national purpose passes over into the direct exploitation of religion for economic and political ends. A good deal of the official piety in Washington, it is charged, is of this kind, and much of the new religiousness of businessmen and business interests throughout the country. Certainly, when we find great corporations such as U. S. Steel distributing Norman Vincent Peale's *Guideposts* in huge quantities to their employees, when we find increasing numbers of industrial concerns placing "plant chaplains" on their staffs, we are not altogether unjustified in suspecting that considerations of personnel policy have somehow entered into these good works of religion.

---

*National messianism is as old as America. Over a century ago, in 1850, Herman Melville delivered himself of the following impassioned outburst in *White Jacket:* "God has predestined, mankind expects, great things for our race; and great things we feel in our souls. . . . We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours. . . . Long enough have we debated whether, indeed, the political Messiah has come. But he has come in us. . . . And let us remember that with ourselves, almost for the first time in history, national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy, for we cannot do a good to America but we give alms to the world." Nor is national messianism today limited to the chauvinists and "imperialists"; it has its "liberal" version as well. "America," writes Hugh Miller in *An Historical Introduction to Modern Philosophy*, "was not created to be supreme among the 'great powers.' It was created to inaugurate the transition of human society to just government. It is a missionary institution."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RELIGION is taken very seriously in present-day America, in a way that would have amazed and chagrined those who were so sure not very long ago that the ancient superstition was bound to disappear very shortly in the face of the steady advance of science and reason. Religion has not disappeared; it is probably more pervasive and influential than it has been for generations. The only question is: What is it that Americans *believe in* when they are religious?

"The 'unknown God' of Americans seems to be faith itself," Reinhold Niebuhr remarks. What Americans believe in when they are religious is religion itself. Of course, religious Americans speak of God, but what they seem to regard as really redemptive is primarily religion, the "positive" attitude of *believing*. It is this faith in faith that is the outstanding characteristic of contemporary American religiosity. Daniel Poling's formula: "I began saying in the morning two words, 'I believe'—those two words *with nothing added. . . .*"* (emphasis mine) may be taken as the classic expression of this aspect of American faith.

As one surveys the contemporary scene, it appears that the "results" Americans want to get out of faith are primarily "peace of mind," happiness, and success. Religion is valued too as a means of cultural enrichment. There is ordinarily no criticism of the ends themselves in terms of the ultimate loyalties of a God-centered faith, nor is there much concern about what the religion or the faith is all about, since it is not the content of the belief but the attitude of believing that is felt to be operative.

Almost as much as worldly success, religion is expected to produce a kind of spiritual euphoria, the comfortable feeling that one is all right with God. Roy Eckardt calls this the cult of "divine-human chumminess" in which God is envisioned as the "Man Upstairs," a "Friendly Neighbor," Who is always ready to give you the pat on the back you need when you happen to feel blue. "The 'gospel' makes [us] 'feel real good.'"* Again, all sense of the ambiguity and precariousness of human life, all sense of awe before the divine majesty, all sense of judgment before the divine holiness, is shut out; God is, in Jane Russell's inimitable phrase, a "livin' Doll." What relation has this kind of god to the Biblical God Who confronts sinful man as an enemy before He comes out to meet repentant man as a Savior? Is this He of Whom we are told, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31)?

The cultural enrichment that is looked for in religion varies greatly with the community, the denomination, and the outlook and status of the church members. Liturgy is valued as aesthetically and emotionally "rewarding," sermons are praised as "interesting" and "enjoyable," discussions of the world relations of the church are welcomed as "educational," even theology is approved of as "thought provoking." On another level, the "old-time religion" is cherished by certain segments of the population because it so obviously enriches their cultural life.

But, in the last analysis, it is "peace of mind" that most Americans expect of religion. "Peace of mind" is today easily the most popular gospel that goes under the name of religion; in one way or another it invades and permeates all others forms of contemporary religiosity. It works in well with the drift toward other-direction characteristic of large sections of American society, since both see in adjustment the supreme good in life. What is desired, and what is promised, is the conquest of insecu-

*"A Running Start for Every Day," *Parade*, September 19, 1954.

*"The cult of the 'Man Upstairs.' A rhapsodic inquiry greets us from the TV screen and the radio: 'Have you talked to the Man Upstairs?' God is a friendly neighbor who dwells in the apartment just above. Call on him any time, especially if you are feeling a little blue. He does not get upset over your little faults. He understands. . . . Thus is the citizenry guided to divine-human chumminess. . . . Fellowship with the Lord, is, so to say, an extra emotional jag that keeps [the individual] happy. The 'gospel' makes him 'feel real good'" ("The New Look in American Piety," *The Christian Century*, November 17, 1954).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rity and anxiety, the overcoming of inner conflict, the shedding of guilt and fear, the translation of the self to the painless paradise of "normality" and "adjustment."

On every ground, this type of religion is poles apart from authentic Jewish-Christian spirituality, which, in the words Ernest Renan is said to have used describing the "true Israelite," is "torn with discontent and possessed with a passionate thirst for the future," a future in which all things will be renewed and restored to their right relation to God.

The burden of my criticism of American religion is that contemporary religion is so naively, so innocently *man-centered*. Not God, but man—man in his individual and corporate being—is the beginning and end of much of present-day American religiosity. In this kind of religion there is no sense of transcendence, no sense of the nothingness of man and his works before a holy God; in this kind of religion the values of life, and life itself, are not submitted to Almighty God to judge, to shatter, and to reconstruct; on the contrary, life, and the values of life, are given an ultimate sanction by being identified with the divine. In this kind of religion it is not man who serves God, but God who is made to serve man and his purposes—whether these purposes be economic prosperity, free enterprise, social reform, democracy, happiness, security, or "peace of mind." God is conceived as man's "omnipotent servant," in Jules H. Masserman's phrase, faith as a sure-fire device to get what we want. The American is a religious man, and in many cases personally humble and conscientious. But religion as he understands it is not something that makes for humility or an uneasy conscience: it is something that reassures him about the essential rightness of his nation, his culture, and himself; something that validates his goals and his ideals instead of calling them into question; something that enhances his self-regard instead of challenging it; something that feeds his self-sufficiency instead of shattering it; something that offers him salvation on easy terms instead of demanding repentance and a "broken heart." Because it does all these things, his religion, however sincere and well meant, is ultimately vitiated by a strong idolatrous element.

III

AMERICANS are, in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, at one and the same time, among the most religious and most secular of nations. They fill the houses of worship, but their conceptions, standards, and values, their institutions and loyalties, bear a strangely ambiguous relation to the teachings that the churches presumably stand for. The goals and values of life are apparently established autonomously, and religion is brought in to provide an enthusiastic mobilization of human resources for the promotion of the well-being of the individual and society. Of the very same Americans who so overwhelmingly affirmed their belief in God and their membership in the historic churches in a recent poll, a majority also affirmed, without any sense of incongruousness, that their religion has little to do with their politics or business affairs, except to provide an additional sanction and drive. Most of the other activities of life—education, science, entertainment—could be added to the list; they too apparently operate under their own rules, with religion invoked as a "spiritual" embellishment and a useful sustaining force. This is not felt as in any sense a disparagement of religion; it is merely America's way of defining for itself the place of religion in the scheme of things. But this way of looking at things is precisely the way of secularism, for what is secularism but the practice of the absence of God in the affairs of life? The secularism characteristic of the American mind is implicit and is not felt to be at all inconsistent with the most sincere attachment to religion. It is, nevertheless, real and pervasive, and in this sense Oscar Handlin is certainly right in saying (in *The American People in the Twentieth Century*) that America is growing more secularist, at the very time when, in another sense, in the sense of affiliation and identification and of the importance attributed to religion, Amer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ica is becoming increasingly more religious.

So thoroughly secularist has American religion become that the familiar distinction between religion and secularism appears to be losing much of its meaning. Both the "religionists" and the "secularists" cherish the same basic values and organize their lives on the same fundamental assumptions—values and assumptions defined by the American Way of Life. What really seems to distinguish one from the other is that the avowed secularists are suspicious of, sometimes even hostile to, institutional religion and its influence in public life, while the implicit secularism pervading American religion identifies itself wholeheartedly with the religious institutions of the nation. The tension between the two is no less sharp, though the issues that divide them are rather different than the simple distinction between religion and secularism would imply.

The widespread secularism of American religion is often difficult for Europeans to understand, since in Europe the confrontation between secularism and religion tends to be much more explicit and well defined. In the United States, explicit secularism—hostility or demonstrative indifference to religion—is a minor and diminishing force; the secularism that permeates the American consciousness is to be found within the churches themselves and is expressed through men and women who are sincerely devoted to religion. The witness to authentic Jewish-Christian faith may well prove much more difficult now than when faith had to contend with overt and avowed unbelief.

THE spirit of secularism has always been pervasive and powerful and has always had its effect on religious institutions. The unique feature of the present religious situation in America is that this secularism is being generated out of the very same conditions that are, in part at least, making for the contemporary religious revival. The sociological factors that underlie the new urge to religious identification and affiliation are also factors that enhance the secularization of the religiousness they engender. It is not secularism as such that is characteristic of the present religious situation in this country, but secularism within a religious framework, the secularism of a religious people.

Yet there are signs of deeper and more authentic stirrings of faith. Duncan Norton-Taylor, in his comments on the new religiousness of businessmen (*Fortune*, October 1953), may not be altogether wrong in noting that "particularly among the younger men, there *is* a groping for a spiritual base." Norman Thomas, though recognizing that the "return to religion," which is "one of the significant phenomena of our confused and troubled times," is a "phenomenon of many and contradictory aspects," nevertheless finds it, in part at least, "definitely characterized by an awareness of, or search after God." Certainly among the younger people, particularly among the more sensitive young men and women on the campuses of this country, there are unmistakable indications of a concern with religion that goes far beyond the demands of mere social "belonging."* These stirrings are there; they are not always easily identified as religion on the one hand, or easily distinguishable from the more conventional types of religiousness on the other—but they constitute a force whose range and power should not be too readily dismissed. Only the future can tell what these deeper stirrings of faith amount to and what consequences they hold for American religiousness.

But even the more conventional forms of American religion, for all their dubiousness, should not be simply written off by the man of faith. Even in this ambiguous structure there may be elements and aspects—not always those, incidentally, that seem most prepossessing to us today—which could in the longer view transform the inner character of American religion and bring it closer to the faith it professes. After all, the God Who is able to make the "wrath of man" to praise Him (Ps. 75:10) is surely capable of turning even the follies of religion into an instrument of His redemptive purpose.

*See my article, "The Religious Stirring on the Campus," COMMENTARY (March 1952).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE FATE OF OTTO FREUNDLICH

Painter "Maudit"

EDOUARD RODITI

AMONG the sixty or more Jewish painters and sculptors who died as victims of Nazi extermination policies and were represented, in February 1955, in the commemorative exhibition organized in the Galerie Zak in Paris by the Musée d'Art Juif, Otto Freundlich was the only Cubist, in fact one of the very few whose work reveals an awareness of the more modern trends that lead to Surrealism, to abstraction, and beyond. Yet Freundlich, two weeks later, was not represented at all in the commemorative exhibition of the Epoque Héroique of Cubism that Waldemar George, the official historian of the Paris School, had organized in the Galerie de l'Institut; none of the other "Cubists of the first hour" seemed, however, to have been forgotten, and even Alfred Reth, though not mentioned in the catalogue, had been added as an afterthought and was represented by one large painting.

A conspiracy of silence seems indeed to have doomed the work of Otto Freundlich, a moody and friendless German Jew from Stolp in Eastern Pomerania, to an obscurity from which several fruitless attempts, in recent years, have failed to salvage him. Among the early Cubists who lived in Montmartre before 1914 and associated with Picasso in the heroic years when the mythical *"bateau lavoir"* was anchored, like Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat, on the heights of the Rue Ravignan, only Freundlich now seems to obtain no recognition at all in the world of private collectors, of art dealers, of critics, and of museum directors. After Picasso, Braque, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Modigliani, Marcel Duchamp, and Jacques Villon, Metzinger, Delaunay, Herbin, Lhote, and Survage are now being remembered again, mentioned in histories of art, and represented in many major collections. In spite of his undeniable mastery of a style that has acquired the prestige of anything consecrated by sheer time, in spite of his obvious originality and seriousness of intent, and his personal contribution towards the evolution of art from Cubism to two-dimensional non-objective painting, Freundlich indeed failed to assure himself—even after his tragic deportation from German-occupied France to Eastern Europe and his death in the gas chambers of a Nazi extermination camp—of the kind of recognition granted to almost every other painter of this group, which has by now acquired a kind of Olympian status in the history of modern art. Why is it that the rediscovery of the many German moderns banned from the museums and galleries of the Third Reich, of Lovis Corinth, Emil Nolde, Carl Hofer, of Paul Klee, Oskar Schlemmer, and Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner, has failed to attract any serious posthumous attention to the scattered works of one who was a personal friend of both Picasso and Kandinsky, of Kurt Schwitters as well as of Piet Mondrian?

WHAT with Pascin, Modigliani, Simeon Solomon, and even Soutine, the Jewish artist as an artist *maudit* has been an all too familiar figure in modern times. Here EDOUARD RODITI uncovers another, and one who deserves to be better known. The author's last appearance in these pages was with an article on Alfred Memmi's novel *Statue of Salt*, in the April 1955 issue. Mr. Roditi was born in Paris in 1910, of American parents, and educated in France and England as well as this country. He has contributed to many periodicals and published two books, *Oscar Wilde* (1947) and *Poems, 1928-48* (1949), both put out by New Directions. At present he is living in France as a free-lance writer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An article in the January 1955 issue of the Paris periodical *Le musée vivant* discusses the work of Otto Freundlich's friend Alfred Reth, a Cubist who had exhibited close to a hundred paintings in the famous Berlin exhibition of *Der Sturm* in 1913, an event as important in the history of modern art as New York's legendary Armory Show. Like Freundlich, who was also one of the stars of the Berlin exhibition, Reth has somehow failed to maintain, since then, the reputation among dealers, critics, and collectors that he seemed already to have established. The vaguely Marxist and moralizing critic of *Le musée vivant* concludes, quite rightly, that Reth's present obscurity can be attributed to his constant refusal to allow himself to be taken up by any of the "capitalistic" art dealers who, in recent decades, have become rich by publicizing and selling the works of those producers of art in whose future they had been able to invest. There had indeed been painters, such as Gustave Moreau in 19th-century Paris and Louis Eilshemius or Florine Stettheimer in recent years in New York, who were never pressed by the need to sell their works. Deprived of the publicity of one-man shows and of auction-room competitiveness, these artists have not always obtained the kind of recognition that their work actually deserves. Freundlich, desperately poor throughout the three and a half decades of his productive life, somehow managed to achieve, in this one respect, the same effect as his most wealthy colleagues. Much as unemployment is a macabre parody of the bored leisure of the idle rich, so was Freundlich's social and economic alienation, whether in Germany or in Paris, always a grim travesty of the chic and well-heeled bohemia in which Gertrude Stein entertained Picasso or Matisse in her elegant Left Bank home, and in which a Kahnweiler or a Rosenberg grew rich by marketing the production of artists whose confidence they quite properly enjoyed.

Otto Freundlich was born in 1878 in Stolp, a provincial center on the Baltic Coast of Eastern Pomerania that has now been annexed by Communist Poland. His father was a prosperous merchant whose household aped the standard of living of local landed gentry. His mother died when he was still very young, and his father remarried. Otto hated his stepmother and soon developed many of the neurotic symptoms of the deprived child. After 1900, when he went to study art history in Munich, he became increasingly estranged from his family. The frequency of mixed marriages among his siblings indicates that they may all have identified their instability with their alien Jewish heritage and sought assimilation among Gentile Germans. Be that as it may, Otto Freundlich himself married several times and seems never to have sought happiness with a Jewish woman; of traditional Judaism, he retained at best but a few vague notions, barely more detailed than those of his non-Jewish friends. On his memories of an unhappy boyhood he never wasted any nostalgic sentiment.

After moving for a while from Munich to Florence, Freundlich began, at the age of twenty-seven, to feel the urge to be a creative artist rather than an art historian. Instead of studying in an academy of fine arts, however, or with an accepted master, Freundlich devoted his next two years to a kind of solitary study and research that was better suited to his uncompromising and unsociable nature so rarely prone to comply with any tradition or convention and to tolerate the tastes and style of another artist.

Though Freundlich subsequently attributed his extreme hardness of hearing to an illness which occurred on his return to Germany after 1914, his deafness may actually have developed as a psychosomatic manifestation of his hatred of his fatherland and his refusal to communicate in German with other Germans. When the architect Wilhelm Gropius, after the First World War, offered Freundlich a professorship at the Bauhaus in Weimar, this honor which would have assured him fame as an associate of Klee and Kandinsky was scornfully refused because Freundlich preferred to starve in isolation in Paris. As early as his first ap-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pearance among the Paris Cubists in 1908, Freundlich managed moreover to establish and maintain this isolation. One of the results was to condemn his work to almost complete obscurity.

Haunted from the very start by considerations of the true rather than of the beautiful, he began to paint, in addition to a few figurative and generally allegorical compositions, purely constructive and two-dimensional arrangements of irregular patterns, generally broken up in flat patches of bright contrasting colors but also, at times, of graded shades of the same color, varying from the palest blues, for instance, to the darkest blue-black. Nor did Freundlich ever abandon, after that, the principles of this art which avoids naturalism without limiting itself exclusively to nonobjectivity, and eschews Impressionism, though without sacrificing color. Throughout his productive years, he continued to paint occasional figurative compositions, and it is sometimes very difficult to date his works according to their subject, their style, or their range of colors.

WHEN Freundlich moved to Paris in 1908, he was almost penniless. At once, he was drawn to the circle of early Cubists around Picasso and Apollinaire. Among Freundlich's unpublished papers, we find an autobiographical fragment about these early Paris years. He seems to have been introduced to the iconoclasts of Montmartre by the collector Wilhelm Uhde and by Rudolf Levy, the Berlin Fauvist painter, who also died subsequently in a Nazi concentration camp. Of the "illusionist" art of the Impressionists, Freundlich speaks rather contemptuously, praising Picasso for having been one of the first to liberate painting from the slavery of perspective. A gallery in the Rue Laffitte in Paris was one of the first to show Freundlich's work, and he was then invited to exhibit, in 1911 and 1913, in the Amsterdam Kunstring with other experimental artists of the Paris school as well as in New York's Armory Show. Vaguely associated with Delaunay and the short-lived Orphist school, Freundlich seems to have shared, for a while, the "synchromistic" theories that distinguish the work of the American painters Stanton Macdonald White and Russell Morgan.

But Freundlich, who was a literalist of the two-dimensional canvas and forbade himself a third dimension in all of his paintings, never limited his experimental activity to painting. As early as 1909, he began to produce sculpture too, a "Man's Head" and, in 1910, a "Woman's Head" that was followed by two monumental plaster heads that he exhibited at the Sonderbund show in Cologne. After the First World War, he added mosaic, stained glass, engraved glass, and tapestry to his existing techniques of self-expression. Throughout his life, he also wrote constantly about art, long prose diatribes full of philosophical and political implications that for the most part have remained unpublished.

In 1914, in a rare moment of luck, Freundlich managed to escape internment as an enemy alien in France and returned to Germany. As soon as he was able to find his bearings, he became very active in a number of pacifist and leftist groups, amongst artists and writers who, in Berlin, were subsequently prominent in the Spartacist movement at the end of the war. With Georg Grosz and Ludwig Meidner, he was a regular contributor of vignettes and line drawings to Franz Pfempfert's more Anarchist than Communist periodical, *Die Aktion*, which was also publishing the early writings of Ludwig Rubiner and Gottfried Benn, of Lunacharsky, who was soon to be the commissar of culture and education in Soviet Russia, and of the poet Johannes R. Becher, who was destined, over twenty years later, to become a cabinet minister in Russian-occupied East Germany.

During these war years, Freundlich also managed to acquire in Berlin, the Rhineland, and Switzerland a few enlightened patrons, who subsequently bought his works at regular intervals and kept him alive for the next twenty years. Joseph Feinhals, a Cologne businessman, was perhaps the most faithful and generous of them, accumulating through the years a large collection of Freundlichs that were all destroyed, with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

notable exception of a great mosaic, "Genesis," in an air raid during the Second World War. In these years of feverish protest that often neglected to be prudent, Freundlich also acquired a few obscurantist enemies to whose unrelenting hatred he owed, some dozen years later, the doubtful honor of providing unwittingly the cover design for the catalogue of Hitler's traveling exhibition of "degenerate art" in 1934. With Chagall, the Expressionist painter Ludwig Meidner, and the sculptor Haizmann, Freundlich thus shared the honor of being one of the first victims of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda in the field of modern art.

In 1924, Freundlich obtained permission to settle in France again as an artisan specialized in stained-glass windows and mosaics. He seems to have failed to find a satisfactory adjustment, either politically or psychologically, in postwar Berlin. Eternally in revolt against anything that reminded him, even subconsciously, of parental authority, whether against all that was German or all that smacked of any tradition, he could feel happy only in a city like Paris where, without ties of family or nationality, he was able to ignore the presence of fellow citizens who lived a less bohemian life or had deeper roots. In the 20's, he exhibited regularly at the Salon des Indépendants and devoted a lot of attention to the somewhat ephemeral politics of the art world, joining and denouncing, in turn, a number of various groups or schools. He was active, for instance, with Ben Nicholson, Alexander Calder, Albert Gleizes, Herbin, Moholy-Nagy, Wolfgang Paalen, Alfred Reth, and Kurt Seligmann, in the Abstraction Création group in 1931; in the group of the Galerie Renaissance and, with the painter Valensi, in the Musicalist group. Freundlich also exhibited in Holland, Switzerland, and England, at Peggy Guggenheim's gallery in London. In 1938, Jeanne Bucher celebrated his sixtieth birthday in Paris by giving him a one-man show, from which a large triptych was purchased by subscription and presented to the Jeu de Paume museum, whose collection became, after 1945, the nucleus of the Musée de l'Art Moderne. Jankel Adler, Hans Arp, Braque, Derain, Gleizes, Gropius, Max Jacob, Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Léger, Lipschitz, Picasso, Herbert Read, and Wilhelm Uhde were among the sponsors of this subscription, the appeal for which was sent out by a committee that included the novelist Alfred Doeblin and the Surrealist painter Max Ernst. As part of the ill luck that dogged Freundlich throughout his life and even after his death, this triptych was mislaid during the wartime evacuation of the Paris museums and has never been located again.

Freundlich continued to work in Paris, in his ground-floor studio in a backyard of the Rue Denfert Rochereau, near the Luxembourg Gardens, until 1939. The street has now been renamed, rather appropriately considering Freundlich's pacifist and leftist opinions, after the novelist Henri Barbusse; the studio can still be visited, at Number 38, and contains a jumble of unsold or unfinished works that are jealously and none too wisely guarded by the artist's widow, herself an abstract painter, Kosnick-Kloss. When the Second World War broke out, Freundlich was interned by the French as an enemy alien, but was able to escape from his camp when the Germans approached. He found refuge with his wife in Saint Paul de Fenouillet, in the Eastern Pyrenees, and remained near there from 1940 to 1943, undergoing extreme privation but continuing to draw, paint, and write. When he had to register as a Jew under the Vichy regulations, he wrote a personal letter of protest to the highest local authorities, whereas most other Jews in this area tried to pass unnoticed, avoided registration, or got themselves false papers. Little wonder that the local Nazis and their French henchmen found him so easily when they began to round Jews up for deportation to Eastern Europe. He was arrested in a tiny mountain village, Saint Martin de Fenouillet, and removed in March 1943 to the Drancy concentration camp near Paris, from which he was immediately deported to the Lublin-Maida-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nek extermination camp in Poland. He died on his arrival there, barely surviving the dreadful trip. He was sixty-five.

SINCE 1946, a number of Paris galleries have sought to revive interest in Freundlich's work, and retrospective exhibitions of his work have also been given at the Salon des Indépendants in 1947 and, in 1949, at the Sao Paulo Museum in Brazil. An attempt is also being made to collect, edit, and publish some of his many writings on art, only a few scattered examples of which were printed during his lifetime, in *Die Aktion*, for instance, and in *Cahiers d'Art*.

These writings, all in German, indicate how much Freundlich relied, in his thought as well as in his art, on direct personal experience and meditation rather than on learning acquired as a student or a disciple. He takes nothing for granted, practically never quotes any sources, and usually writes as if quite unaware of any previous discussion of the problem that happens to obsess him. His opinions thus have the curious awkwardness of an autodidact's ruminations consigned to paper on a desert island, then enclosed in an old bottle and cast out to sea: "The essence of a curve is the expression of a sense of direction in motion. In itself, an angle is negative: it has neither volume nor substance. A curve is caused by substance which expands its energies in one or more directions." Of this kind of very Germanic wrestling with words and concepts, Freundlich has left us page upon page, all unpublished; as one now reads these fading manuscripts, one often wonders whether the author was at all aware of the numerous contradictions they contain.

Like the self-taught philosopher Constantin Brunner, who was his contemporary, Freundlich was an enthusiastic reader of Spinoza. But he seems to have interpreted the lens-grinder of Amsterdam as a kind of egocentric mystic and never as a systematic thinker who drew on his readings of the many other philosophers whom he had studied. Quite alienated from the fashionable society of art patrons, critics, and magazine editors for whom the great Picasso puts on a non-stop show, Freundlich was almost asocial, more concerned with self-expression than with communication, a striking example of the sheer "cussedness" of much modern art that isn't specifically Parisian. If there are "*peintres maudits*" in our age as there were "*poètes maudits*" in Verlaine's, then Otto Freundlich must be classed with Kurt Schwitters, Alexis von Jawlensky, and a couple of others who were destined to become famous only after their death because they were unsociable if inventive spirits who failed or refused to find critics or dealers to handle their public relations and their business.

All of Freundlich's writings indicate that he was more interested in his own subjective initiation, as an artist through his own work and as an adept in a philosophy of life that inspired him, than in elucidating any objective structures in the society in which he lived. An ardent believer in the identity of the artistic and the social revolution, he concentrated all his hopes in a somewhat simple Communist faith of the kind that was frequent among bohemians of his generation; he would indeed have been utterly shocked had he lived to witness, in our age, the triumph of Socialist Realism and the banning, wherever Communism now prevails, of the kind of individualistic self-expression to which he himself was dedicated.

It is perhaps in his monumental figurative mosaic, "Genesis," now to be placed in the new theater of Cologne, that Freundlich's mystical conception of the universe and of life is most clearly expressed. The individual patch of color, as in a painting by Seurat, here loses its identity completely for the sake of a purpose much more vast; each color thus survives only as one of the many metamorphoses of light, of the light that pervades all of Freundlich's work, with very few exceptions, much as it does most of William Blake's too. This very mysticism, so Germanic in many respects, since Blake, too, derived it from Swedenborg, is what gives Freundlich's work at times a brooding pathos alien to the spirit of the School of Paris; his own is one of dedication to a single idea, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is almost akin to cultism or monomania. Freundlich did not realize that the artist's own conceptions and tastes need not be, merely because rejected today by the crowd, inevitably those of a wiser and less unjust future. Never as urbane, as brilliantly versatile as Picasso, Freundlich appears to have been a kind of tragic hermit of the modern movement in art; he is now a reproachful Banquo's ghost haunting many museums, exhibitions, and art histories from which he is still unjustly excluded. In his own lifetime, he remained convinced that he was a victim of all sorts of prejudices inherited from an evil past of economic exploitation and tyrannous traditionalism, all of which were doomed to disappear in a social revolution. Blind to any virtues of the past, unsuccessful and unhappy in the present, he placed all his hopes in the future. To Cubism and the abstract movement in art, he remains, in many respects, what Max Beerbohm's Enoch Soames was to the movement of the Naughty 90's.

For all his Marxism, Freundlich continued to be profoundly religious, unaware as ever of all contradictions in his own thought and life. But he was religious in an individual and fundamentally heretical manner. Among his unpublished writings, there is an essay where he affirms that "Religion has nothing at all to do with God. A man may be religious without believing in God." Of this kind of iconoclastic theism so characteristic of many of the self-taught *"hommes révoltés"* of 20th-century bohemia, Otto Freundlich remains, with Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen, and a few others, a striking example indeed.

THE Dutch critic Michel Seuphor, who lives in Paris, has observed that Otto Freundlich was never, strictly speaking, a Cubist, since his compositions are of small plane surfaces without any suggestion of volume, in fact examples of a kind of harlequin or "patchwork quilt" art that is as alien to traditional easel-painting as it could possibly be. In one of his writings, Freundlich explains his reasons for adopting his somewhat literalist conception of the picture as a strictly two-dimensional pattern that must eschew the illusion, except by a very stylized analogy, of a three-dimensional reality: "I am convinced that the social freedom towards which we are striving cannot be attained if we are not capable of granting its freedom to the whole visible world. That is why I have refrained, as a painter, from relying on my eye, which has become, as an organ, a mere serf. I no longer record the expressions and manifestations of the freedom of all men, all things, and everything visible on the basis of the impressions that reach me through my eyes, since they are no longer capable of perceiving anything that has to do at all with freedom."

To identify the artist's reconstruction of the visual world with his absolute freedom from any sensual perception, this is already a strange notion on the part of one who claims to be a firm believer in Spinoza, one of whose basic tenets was *"Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu"* ("Nothing enters the mind unless through the senses"). To explain away this discrepancy remained nevertheless within the range of a logically consistent idealistic philosophy. How Freundlich ever hoped, however, to reconcile these beliefs of his as an artist with Lenin's materialism, this is indeed a mystery of the kind that illustrates the curiously unphilosophical faith of the decades between 1910 and 1940, of the era when one could still honestly identify revolution in politics with revolution in the arts, economic progress with moral improvement, the liberation of the individual from all that seemed to constrain him psychologically with the liberation of whole social groups and nations from economic or political shackles, when it was possible, in one and the same breath, to proclaim an absolute faith in Communism, Cubism, the twelve-tone scale, Surrealism, psychoanalysis, and theosophy.

In his unpublished memoirs of his life as a painter in Paris before the First World War, Freundlich gives us a curiously self-centered interpretation of the limitations that inspired Picasso, in those years, to break with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "illusionist" tradition of Impressionism: "Although Picasso had restored unity to the picture surface by liberating the means of painting of the older school from having to serve the object-in-itself and the space-in-itself of perspective, thus forcing values to become functions and subordinating these functions to a principle of surface architecture, there yet existed, at that time, a recognition that even these values-in-themselves could be condemned as part of the heritage of illusionism and a demand for the functions of pure surface, without anything beyond it and limited to itself, as the only possible element, without any compromise, for a pictorial structure that is purely one of surface."

In 1908, before Piet Mondrian and all the more recent abstract painting, this was a very original and revolutionary conception of the nature and purposes of a painting as distinguished from a three-dimensional static sculpture or a mobile. As a theorist, Otto Freundlich was thus one of the most unorthodox among the artists of his iconoclastic generation, a man of the same category as Marcel Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters. As a painter, he remains the author of a number of truly impressive compositions that rank easily with those of Mondrian and Kandinsky, and are clearly superior to those of Herbert Bayer or Jean Hélion. In his life, he displayed many of the currently recognized symptoms of sheer genius: an impressive and almost abnormal head that is well portrayed, with its heavy features and gloomy expression, in a lithograph by Otto Dix, an earnestness of purpose, a sense of dedication, a contempt for the past, and a childish faith in the future. But he lacked the sense of criticism that would have made it easier for him to communicate all that he felt and thought; above all, he lacked the quality of elegance or taste that enables an artist and his works to fit into a society that satisfies its prestige needs through the arts.

Freundlich's tragic fate tends to suggest that sheer genius, in modern painting, may no longer be enough, that an artist who rejects all the past may thereby be depriving himself of communication with future generations too; in fact, that prudence must temper, in art as well as in life, the promptings of a talent that might easily become too iconoclastic, too egocentric, too humorless, or too unsociable if left to itself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

COMEDIAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT

Jewish Experience, Everybody's Humor

MORRIS FREEDMAN

TELEVISION, the new American living-room pastime, has developed a new type of comedian, or perhaps merely revived an old one: the man who just talks. He is low-pressured, genial, casual, striking just the right conversational tone for a visit to the home. Godfrey, Steve Allen, George Gobel, Dave Garroway, Wally Cox direct themselves to pleasing with easy-going manners and mildly puckish humor. While he shares their uninsistent amiability, Sam Levenson depends rather on what might be called running social criticism. He works most often with a prepared text, a monologue in which he focuses on widely familiar areas of contemporary experience. But the thing that distinguishes him most sharply from his contemporaries is his capacity to provoke a good old-fashioned belly laugh.

FROM the beginning, Levenson's success was something of a puzzle to other comedians and to Broadway professionals. He fell into none of the current patterns. A former schoolteacher, he didn't even know what to do with his hands while performing. Not that he wasn't plagiarized widely. "All over the country," he wrote to a friend while on tour, "there are imitation Sam Levensons, even ladies. I've got to sit and listen to them. They miss the point. When they don't echo me feebly, they tell dirty stories." One Catskill comic has made his career by rendering Levenson's material, sometimes verbatim, into Yiddish or with an accent—and adding for his own purpose a good seasoning of the vulgar.

Levenson's comedy *is* deceptively ordinary. His content is everyday experience, of which everybody has his share. Typical subjects are: Papa's surliness at the end of a working day; a family visit to the museum; the obscure and baffling Biblical passages school principals read in assembly; summer camping; modern sex education; the feeding and raising of children, yesterday and today; current styles in naming children; life in a Catskill resort; aspects of modern education; Mama's cooking; family pets. The focus is always on the average middle-class family. What is different about Levenson is the no-nonsense attitude toward the material. Levenson brings to his subjects a seriousness which insists on truth and a shrewdness in seeing familiar material freshly, or in simply seeing this material for what it is, not for what it has become to most of us as the result of the pressure of sentiment or fashion. Consider his descriptions of the euphemistic jargon of progressive report cards ("'Emotionally immature for first grade.' Translation: 'Let him bring his own mop.'") or of Mama's cooking ("Everybody in the tenement comes in to test Mama's chicken in the pot. Put in salt. Take it out. Add water. Take out water. In with an onion; out with a carrot. The chicken comes out hard as a rock. The butcher should drop dead")—these

---

IN THE forefront of the new comedians that have come up with television, the comedians in business suits, stands Sam Levenson, whom MORRIS FREEDMAN describes as the cosmic consciousness of the American Jewish middle class. Mr. Freedman, an associate editor of this magazine, contributed "Camp Ramah: Where Hebrew Is the Key" to our May issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

things also try to get at the facts behind the convention. So accurate is his eye for the significant fact that he can define an institution in a detail: "You know how to tell a real genuine kosher delicatessen? One of the neon letters in the 'kosher' sign is not working."

LEVENSON'S sketches of "Mama" fall into a familiar tradition, but the joke comes from the wry truth spicing the expected offering. Although he sometimes seems critical of Mama since he shows her in her reality and not as a stereotype, he is also more understanding of her; his Mama is to be taken for what she was, not for a vaudeville character. "Education was the most important thing to my parents, next to cooking and cleanliness, and they never trusted us to get it. My brother Al would come home with a 90. 'He's going to be a gangster,' Mama would say. If I got a 98, Mama wanted to know who got the other two points. Once I even got a 100. All right? Everything should be fine? Nothing of the sort. 'Some class it must be,' Mama said, pointing at me over her shoulder, 'if that one can get a 100.'" Here, mixed with Mama's suspiciousness, is the admirable expectation that *her* children should get only 100's, and one that spurred them into doing so.

Levenson's comedy is not marked by unkindness, impatience, or bitterness. He has never joked about the atom bomb or about a person's defects. His style is Horatian rather than Juvenalian or—to bring the matter closer to home—Lou Holtzian; even his most unsentimental comments are softened by generosity, or by the forgetfulness in nostalgia. His people never snarl or bay, or cause one to gasp, like those in Lou Holtz's merciless routines—the grandfather who threatens his son during a big dinner party: "Give me another piece of *gefilte* fish or I'll come out of the kitchen." Nor are the members of his family akin to the music hall relatives of Bob Burns, Jessel, Berle, or Crosby, who are really no more than simple, schematic ideas about relatives. Levenson deals with a gentler, more ordinary, more widely recognizable gallery. His people move about alive in the very extensive middle-class world, the one in which Levenson himself has always moved and still does.

MOST East Coast television comedians live in midtown New York, in an opulence appropriate to their status as the royalty of popular culture. Levenson lives in a semi-detached three-story brick house he owns in Crown Heights, in Brooklyn, a block off Eastern Parkway and Kingston Avenue. Although his street and nearby ones happen to be sedately middle class, with large private homes, much of the surrounding neighborhood is scarcely above slum level. Kingston Avenue is lined with small food stores. "I spend a half hour shopping for my wife in the appetizers or butcher shops, and I often pick up a notion or two for a script," Levenson once said. Recently he remarked that he may have to move out to Great Neck or Scarsdale to keep up with his material. He has a thirteen-year-old son named Conrad, and a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Emily.

He works on the top floor of the house, in a room with an immense desk which contains within its great drawers some 30,000 cards of newspaper clippings, jokes, comments, and observations indexed under such headings as "Allergy," "Diet," "Relatives" (with subdivisions for "Cousins on Mother's Side," "Cousins on Father's Side"), "Family Quarrels," "Sex Education," "Landlord-Tenant Relations," and the like. This system is the result of his graduate work at Columbia University under Professor Federico de Onis; his master's thesis is entitled "José Ortega y Gasset: A Study of His Ideas on Art, Music, and Literature." He did not complete his doctorate. "I was studying folklore," Levenson has explained, "and I followed Professor de Onis's method of cataloguing findings." In an essay in *Collier's*, he wrote: "My source material is not the gag file, but the storehouse of memories of my childhood in a big family on the East Side of New York and in Brooklyn, my experiences later on as a schoolteacher in the latter borough, and most recently as a husband and as a father. . . ." Shelves along the walls hold books, including a Modern Library Freud and a volume on Chinese humor, as well as several dozen black spring-binders which contain rough scripts. On top of an assorted pile of books, magazines, papers, and binders, stands a marble female torso in classical style that he and his wife picked up in a junk shop.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ONE morning recently, I took the New Lots Avenue subway out to the Kingston Avenue stop to visit him. In his kitchen, I drank coffee while he had Sanka. We both had slices of a deliciously dry cheese-loaf put up by his wife, Esther, a youthful-looking, pretty woman who had been preparing to teach German in high school before their marriage. When we finished, he got leave to desert the dishes, and we made the long climb to the third floor and sat down at opposite sides of his desk.

"In late years," he said, when he had caught his breath, "I've been discovering more and more that the subject matter of humor is universal. I suppose that's no great finding, but for someone who started his career using a good deal of Yiddish, and specifically Jewish situations, or what seemed like them, it's something of a revelation. I had some reservations about Mama's *kneidlach*. For a long time I wondered whether to work them into a night club routine for general audiences. I tried it, using 'dumplings' for *kneidlach,* in a Texas night club, and the response was terrific. A huge Texan in cowboy boots slapped me on the back after the show, almost ending my career, and boomed, 'Doggone it, just like my maw.'" (Levenson kept returning to this story in his repeated discussions with me about universality.) "I expect the same will happen when I get an equivalent for *yahrzeit* glasses, the ones Mama used to tell us to drink our milk out of until we saw the 'Socony' on the bottom. Do you think Catholic votive candles might be comparable? I've got to look into that." He paused to light a cigar.

"Very few subjects are narrow in appeal, especially those that rise from obviously common things." He lifted a small feather duster from his desk and dropped it. "Take Mama's cleaning habits, which I'm sure were shared by other immigrant mothers. Once we talked her into getting a cleaning woman. She got up at six in the morning and went over every inch of the house. 'I should let a stranger see my house is dirty?' she explained later. Or I think of the straws she would pull out of the kitchen broom to test her baking.

"I spoke at a bankers' and auto manufacturers' dinner in Detroit. In America everyone remembers living on the wrong side of the tracks. Nobody, it seems, lived on the right side. I talked about that and about such details as having to empty out the pan under the icebox, which used to be my job. It went over big. In fact, the only place I had trouble with the icebox routine was in Canada. No iceboxes there; they used a cold room in the basement.

"In working out a subject," he said to me, "I arrange it according to a kind of ascending logic; you know, to the highest point of the ridiculous. I try to get a punch line which bursts light on the whole business. And it's not enough just to have logic on your side; you've got to get your audience to grasp the point—spontaneously, instinctively. On the emotional explanation for over-eating, for example. A sober presentation, whether you accept it or not, doesn't bring out the possibility of foolishness. But something like this does, I think: 'Psychiatrists say people over-eat not because they are hungry for food but for affection. They may be right. I knew a girl once who was in love with a pumpernickel.'"

SOME of Levenson's old fans feel that his style has been losing its sharpness to the degree that it has abandoned its specific Jewish coloration. Levenson remarked in this regard that while he takes his inspiration from Jewish life, he focuses on the point where Jewish tradition cuts across the general pattern and "ties a knot" there.

"Jewish family life, the Jewish experience, is special only to a certain extent," he said to me. "Some think that Jews alone are responsible for popular American humor, what with all the Jewish comedy stars. Now the Jews may be in the vanguard in establishing the tone, the character of laughter, on the American scene, even the content, the way they seem always to be among the first to pick up or to set fashion—in progressive education, in modern furniture, in science, in medicine, in politics, in psychiatry, and so on. But what they offer meets very wide needs, sooner or later. They don't manufacture their material in some secret hideout, and they try to sell everybody. Actually, as the modern Jewish and the general experience in America come closer and closer, such a thing as the Jewish comedian, in the sense that the adjective refers to his material or dialect, is bound to disappear."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He cited a research project to indicate the nature of the acceptance he himself has received. In a survey conducted by a network in a large Michigan area, television watchers expressed themselves, almost unanimously, as quite ready to invite him into their homes as a member of their family, a welcome they expressly did not extend to a number of other television comedians whom they objected to because of their "lower class" coarseness. They also declared that they did not feel left out by any of Levenson's comments. In his *Collier's* essay Levenson gave Mama's creed for raising children; it corresponded closely to most of the common national values. In an article in COMMENTARY (August 1952), he wrote: "I have tried to make my mother typical, not only typical of the Jewish mother, but the prototype of the universal mother."

In spite of his "universality," Levenson is still received as a "Jewish" comedian. In part, this may be the result of his simply being something, of rooting himself in a plausible world which does happen to be Jewish, if only in origin; one would never think of calling Milton Berle or Jack Benny "Jewish" *comedians* with reference to their content since their world is the free-floating one of their occupation itself. More important to the characterization may be Levenson's own, apparently unexplored, instinct about the matter. There is a shared idiom, a shared sense of experience, when he appears before an acknowledgedly Jewish audience which makes unnecessary the usual warming up. At the conclusion of a speech of his to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (he played a record of it for me), which described his Jewish education and provoked more intense and prolonged laughter than anything I had ever seen him do on television, he thanked the assemblage for inviting him. "After all," he said, "can I open up like this on television?" (He himself insists, however, that many of his night club appearances have been just as hilarious.)

ACTUALLY Levenson "opens up" more on television than most of the new comedians—if by opening up is meant going beyond sheer manner. Week-in and week-out television favors the man of quick wit who can respond promptly and with an easy insouciance to the unpredictable, fleeting opportunities that arise—or are made to arise—on the amorphous shows prevalent today, which offer little else but parlor entertainment. The self-effacing gentility of most of the new comedians (almost every one of whom is non-Jewish) is certainly a relaxing contrast to the hypertonic cavorting of the old-style comedians, who insisted in every gesture, in every comment, on strict attention to themselves. (Berle or Henny Youngman is never so good as when overwhelming a heckler in a night club who threatens to divert the audience's attention.) But Levenson, with all of his gentleness, is more than genteel; for gentility generally accommodates to things as they are. "Gentility" is not critical, openly or implicitly. Levenson is skeptical and ironic; moreover, he works with a plausible reality. His comedy, like any genuine criticism, often jolts one with the rightness of its revelation.

Levenson is interested in everything. During one luncheon session, we covered modern fiction, juvenile delinquency, the character of waiters (from "the angry ones" to the touts), suburban living, the sociology of television, Mama's chopped herring (it always needed just a touch "acick"), Catskill resorts, children's books (he wants someday to write one called *"Nebach,* the Rabbit Who Couldn't"), teaching children a musical instrument. To every subject he brought a genuine and sensible seriousness which nevertheless kept spilling over into a hearty and wholesome laughter as he caught the comic and the ridiculous on the edge of things. His immense good humor, his abandoned, infectious laugh (he tosses his head back and loses himself completely in the wildness of a joke), divest even hallowed subjects of their sombreness; and to his instinctive, hugely jovial view of the universe he adds the fillip of shrewd, insightful comment.

A thoughtful television observer I know, a man who brings to popular culture the same critical interest he does to his profession as literary critic and teacher, tried to account to me for Levenson's capacity to produce the extreme, tearful laughter he is noted for. "He forces us to let down the guard of our affectations, so to speak," he put it, "the way the old slapstick comics used to break through our mature inhibitions. We

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yield to him, give ourselves up. We don't initially want to see the truth of his commentary, just as we would never think of getting involved in the antics of Chaplin or the Marx brothers. When we do begin to grant the point, perhaps because of his geniality, the pull between the actuality and our pretense, between what we really are and what we want to be or what we think we are, that tension forces the explosive release. We are not inclined to resist him. He does all this without offense, for there is nothing so horrible in considering Mama's saintliness in the light of truth, or in skepticism about progressive education or modern child-rearing. Certainly his own joining in the laughter sets up an atmosphere of *Gemütlichkeit* in which one can speak plainly but comfortably.

"Because he works so closely with the real and specific, you'd expect him to be best with Jewish material, his own experience. But where the Jewish experience overlaps the general one, as in sex education, for example, he is every bit as unsettling to *goyim*."

I talked with a Gentile observer of popular culture, a novelist and critic. "Levenson seems to me right in the Jewish tradition of American humor," he said to me. "He keeps poking at reality, turning it round and round, seeing all sorts of things that have been kept hidden. He leaves few things alone. American Protestant tradition is to live by the taboos, to take the big things straight, not to joke about them. Of course, Levenson's is the great style now, even Gobel and Shriner work this way, although their subject matter is not so concretely defined as Levenson's, their objective not so clear. It's the fashion now to be titillated out of innocence about one's most settled instincts. Fred Allen, with his thin, almost British understatement and an irreverence directed at surface foolishness in rather limited places, has not had an easy time of it in recent years. He seems almost private in his humor."

LEVENSON'S intelligence and intellectuality are the sort of impulses that at one time were expected among immigrant Jewish families to turn to a university or concert career. Levenson himself recorded his mother's hopes and doubts on this score. He appeared on the same platform with Mischa Elman once. "Mama always badgered me to practice so I could be a Mischa Elman," he said on that occasion, and turned to Elman to shake his hand. "I'm glad at last to meet the man who made my childhood so miserable. Mama would be ecstatic to see me right now, shaking hands with Mischa Elman, but she would never believe it. Her Sammy with Elman, nah, an optical illusion." On another occasion he said, with a certain ruefulness, that Mama would not have thought well of a comedian for a son.

A phenomenon like Levenson would have been impossible in the 20's or 30's, when Levenson in fact was preparing for an academic career. Jewish comedians then were almost all music-hall entertainers. Jolson and Cantor sang and danced. Chico Marx played the piano, Harpo the harp; only Groucho was straight clown. The only considerable verbal comedy came from burlesque or vaudeville, limited, disreputable media. There were, of course, the literary exercises of Perelman, Benchley, and Thurber, but these were either persiflage or aimed at such special targets as the excesses of advertising copy or the pretentiousness of corporation procedure. Jack Benny specialized in idle banter. Will Rogers, to be sure, carried on continuously critical fire directed at a larger target—but politics was a perfectly safe and easy sitting duck since it was supposed to involve only politicians.

Today, Levenson's beginnings as a teacher, which he often brings up, adds to his worldly success (his annual income has been reported to be in six figures) the prestige of learning and makes him a critic his audience is prepared to accept (*yichus* mixed with *naches*): one might not tolerate just another comic rolling-in-the-dough who probes such sensitive areas, but one listens respectfully to teacher. His rise to the same platform with Elman, of course, reflects the new respectability of the successful comedian, and the general blurring of the lines dividing art from simple entertainment (although there is obviously much of the creative in Levenson's work).

Levenson's earliest routines were quite different from his present work, the change roughly paralleling the change in the American Jewish situation. Specifically Jewish humor of the 20's and 30's was centered on the narrowly Jewish experience, unsparingly revealing at the extreme marked savagely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by Lou Holtz and more mildly by Smith and Dale, and by Fanny Brice, self-consolingly sentimental at the other extreme of Gertrude Berg and Eddie Cantor. It was always "proletarian," accepting occupation and class, and seemingly indifferent to social ascent. The indifference extended to the question of acceptance by the Gentile world. Dialect, shabbiness, ineptness, petty shrewdness, vulgarity, ruthless ambition—all the less savory qualities of Jewish life at the moment—could be freely depicted, and even exaggerated, for there was nothing to hide from anyone, least of all from oneself. Indeed, one tradition was to attack any attempt to escape from this reality. With the vertical rising up into the middle class, and the horizontal breaking out onto the broader American scene, a new defensiveness marked routines giving "more than was necessary."

Levenson has not by himself abandoned the sometimes raw, always biting, heavily Jewish material of his beginning years (see his book *Meet the Folks*, published in the late 40's); he has simply accompanied his audience away from it. Together with his audience, he has transferred himself out of the Lower East Side of vocabulary and joke to the less "compromising" neighborhoods of discourse (his article in COMMENTARY, among other things, argued against depicting Jews unfavorably, whatever the actuality). Now the overriding preoccupation of his audience is with a particular, immediate truth, the conflict between the past and the present, and Levenson has, for the most part, not equivocated here. His subject matter reflects this preoccupation in a thousand different ways. "When I was young," goes a typical comment, "everything was for Papa. He was served first, he got the best cut, the kids got what was left over. Today everything is for the children. When will I ever taste white meat?"

LEVENSON is unsure today about where he stands; both he and the American Jewish middle class are in the process of settling down. There is the purely practical question. To be anything as a figure in popular culture, one must remain satisfactory on sometimes the most whimsical terms to that combination of forces which determine bookings—sponsor, network, advertising agency, and audience. ("Listener ratings and even sales," Levenson told me, "prove nothing if an agency or network big shot decides you're not good for a particular product.") He has hesitated to participate in some of the more frivolous panel shows, but his reluctance comes as much from principle as from a fear that such foolishness might harm his most profitable—and most effective—image. His continuing argument that he appeals to everyone, not just to Jews or big-city audiences, carries an undertone of rationalization, for he concedes that there are unpredictable fashions in the demand for "Jewish" comedians and it is safer to be a "universal" one.

Television under any circumstances could never allow Levenson, or anyone, to be unguarded. Levenson is best when examining contemporary manners. As with all satirists, his target is excess and the folly that springs from an undeveloped self-awareness. But there are things one doesn't expose in the living room; we can bear kidding about indifferent matters, but not about our sacred cows, and not in the refuge of our homes, and not when we expect "entertainment." Levenson simply can't go after any of the self-protecting pieties or the grosser phenomena of philistine and middlebrow life, in the way Lou Holtz did, even with all the appropriate modern modulations. He could not, for example, explore with full, tart honesty the issue of relations with the old folks.

LEVENSON'S dilemma, obviously, is the old one of simultaneously preserving his integrity and his popularity. He undoubtedly hits a wider portion of the truth than any other contemporary entertainer. One should certainly not be misled by Levenson's clear and serious intention—and substantial achievement—into forgetting that he is primarily an "entertainer," working with a particular talent to amuse a particular audience at a particular time.

Where Levenson will go from here obviously depends to a large extent on where his audience will allow him to go. But it needs him as much as he needs it. If his audience continues along its present strait, "enlightened" path of picking up every latest fashion—in child-rearing, home furnishings, cultural pursuits—with solemn, unquestioning dutifulness, its individuals uncertain whether or how to be themselves, or even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what independence of fashion means, it will continue to require a Sam Levenson to offer it vicarious release from its imprisonment, especially since one of its principal rules is not to appear to take anything seriously. The audience to which Levenson appeals is that immense second generation, the great host of the children of the immigrants. It needs the guidance of someone who is skeptical but protecting, who takes it easy on his "victim," who teaches while he exposes, and who is, moreover, himself utterly involved in the experience he examines. This audience has no formed set of values yet, having abandoned those of Eastern Europe and even of the immigrant settlement in America. It is, obviously, picking up what seem to be the right, generally "American" attitudes, but all the time subjecting these to a certain amount of scrutiny, kidding them, testing, as it were, how well they survive cynicism and ridicule. Deep down, it still finds itself able to take few things for granted, really, not even something so rationally and emotionally persuasive as the new liberalism in bringing up children.

Levenson's manner of unshirkingly confronting his experience and that of his audience has made him an ideal chronicler and commentator for the latter. The humor of the earlier Jewish comedians was that of outsiders thumbing their noses, reflecting their audience's place and sense as outsiders; Groucho Marx was funny in his crouching gait, owlish hair-do, wagging cigar, mustache, without ever saying a word about the intention of all this. Now the audience, "insiders" to one degree or another, is looking for commentary. It wants "criticism" of a rather respectable order, of the sort that can be absorbed meaningfully, one way or another, first into one's thinking, then, perhaps, into a mode of living. The great creators of humor, from Horace to Shaw, offered this sort of revelation, and Sam Levenson is in their tradition—although, of course, he is well aware of the limitations of his medium and of the style he has worked out and would be the first to pooh-pooh his inclusion in such grand company.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CEDARS OF LEBANON

THE BINDING OF ISAAC

From the Sefer Ha-Aggada

THE story of the *akedah,* the binding of Isaac, is the portion from the Bible which is read during the Yom Kippur morning service. Here we present some Aggadic commentary on this Bible passage.

The Aggada includes stories, dialogues, homilies, proverbs, fables, and riddles which are scattered throughout the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud, and other sources as well. Our present selection has been taken from the Bialik-Ravnitzky edition of the Aggada, the great modern Hebrew collection that appeared in six volumes from 1908 onwards. It is the sixth such selection from this work to have appeared in our pages; the translation into English is by Jacob Neusner.

EVEN if God had asked our Father Abraham for the apple of his eye, he would have given it to Him, and not only the apple of his eye, but his life.

And it came to pass after these things that God did prove Abraham . . . (Gen. 22:1). What were these things? R. Johanan in the name of R. Yosi b. Zimra said: After the words of Satan. As it is said, *And the boy grew up and was weaned* (Gen. 21:8). Satan said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Lord of the Universe, this old man, at one hundred years, has been granted the grace of a son. Amidst all his feastings, he failed to set aside for an offering to you a single fowl or pigeon." God said to Satan: "All that he has done is for his son, yet were I to say to him, Sacrifice your son unto me, he would forthwith offer him." Satan answered: "Prove him!" . . .

And God said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac . . . (Gen. 22:2). *Thy son.* Abraham said to Him, "I have two sons" (Isaac and Ishmael). *Thine only son.* "This is the only son of his mother, and that of his mother." *Whom thou lovest.* He said to Him, "Lord of the Universe, are there boundaries in the womb? I love them both!" *Isaac.* And why all this? So that Abraham might not be puzzled concerning the command.

SATAN, disguised as an old man, met Abraham on the way. He said to him: "Where are you going?" Abraham answered, "To pray."

Satan said, "He who goes to pray, does he usually bear fire in his hand and twigs on his shoulder?"

He answered, "Perhaps we shall tarry a day or two, and we shall slaughter and cook and eat."

"Old man, was I not there when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to you, 'Take now thy son'? You fool! A son—given to you at the age of one hundred years—are you going to slaughter him?"

He answered, "Even so, I shall do it."

"And if he tries you more than this, will you endure?"

"Even more, I shall endure it."

"Tomorrow He will say to you, 'Thou art a shedder of blood! Thou hast shed the blood of thy son!'"

"Even so, I shall do it."

And since Satan could not prevail, he turned aside and took the disguise of a youth, and walked on the right of Isaac and said to him:

"Where are you going?"

"To study Torah."

"While you are yet alive, or after your death?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And is there a man who will study after death?"

"O miserable son of a miserable mother! How many fasts did your mother fast and how many prayers did she pray until she bore you! And this old man has lost his mind, and is going to slaughter you!"

Isaac said to him, "Even so, I shall not deny the will of my Creator or the command of my father."

"If so, all the fine clothes your mother has made will go to Ishmael. . . . If the rest does not disturb you, let at least this thing move you!"

Isaac said to his father, "Father, see what this man says to me."

Satan saw that they paid no heed to him, and he went and caused a great river to flow before them. Forthwith Abraham went into the water, until the water reached to his knees. When he came to the middle of the river, the water was up to his shoulders.

At that moment Abraham raised his eyes to Heaven and he said, "Lord of the Universe, Thou hast chosen me and revealed Thyself to me and said to me, I am unique and thou art unique, and by your hand My Name will be made known in My world; and Thou hast said, Offer Isaac thy son to Me for a burnt-offering. And I did not keep him back, and behold, I am engaged in doing Thy will, and even now, *The flood overwhelmeth me* (Ps. 69:2). If I or Isaac should stumble, who will establish Thy word, and by whom will Thy Name be proclaimed One?"

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "By thy life, by thy hand, will My Name be proclaimed One in the world." Forthwith He rebuked the river, and it dried up, and they crossed on dry land.

AND Isaac said, *Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?* (Gen. 22:7). At that moment a great fright and trembling seized Isaac, for he saw nothing in Abraham's hand for the sacrifice; he understood what it was, and he said, "Where is the lamb for the offering?"

Abraham said to him: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has chosen you."

Isaac answered: "If He has chosen me, behold my soul is in His hand; but I am filled with pain for my mother."

And even so. *So they went both of them together* (Gen. 22:7), one to bind and one to be bound, one to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered.

And they came to the place (Gen. 22:9). The two of them brought the stones, the two of them brought the fire, the two of them brought the wood. Abraham was like one who prepares the marriage of his son, and Isaac like one who builds his own wedding canopy.

Isaac said to Abraham: "Father, be quick and do the will of thy Creator, and burn me well, and my ashes shall go to my mother to comfort her. But all the time that my mother looks on it, she will say, 'This is my son, slaughtered by his father.' Father, what will you do in your old age?"

He said to him, "My son, we know that our death is near at hand. He who was merciful to me until now will comfort us until the day of our death."

When he came to sacrifice him, Isaac said: "Father, bind me by my hands and my feet, for the soul is strong to live. And when I see the fire, perhaps I shall tremble and the sacrifice will be spoiled. I entreat, bind me well, that there be no blemish in me." *And Abraham . . . bound Isaac his son* (Gen. 22:9). Isaac said to Abraham, "Father, do not tell my mother while she is standing by a well or on a roof, lest she throw herself forward and die."

AND *[he] laid him on the altar* (Gen. 22:9). The eyes of Abraham looked into the eyes of Isaac, and the eyes of Isaac looked up to Heaven, and tears ran down Abraham's cheeks until his whole body was bent over in weeping. He raised the knife to slaughter Isaac, and Satan came and pushed his arm, so that the knife dropped from his hand. When he put out his hand to pick it up, he began to weep bitterly and sighed a great sigh. He looked up and raised his voice and said, *I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come?* (Ps. 121:1). At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed himself above the angels, opening up the firmament. Isaac raised his eyes and saw the heavenly chambers and he trembled and gasped. In the firmament rows upon rows of ministering angels stood lamenting and weeping, and they said to one another: "See, an only son

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slaughters and an only son is slaughtered. Lord of the Universe, what will come of Thine oath, *So shall Thy seed be?"*

Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael, "Why are you standing there? Don't let him do it!"

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham" (Gen 22:11). Two times, like one who cries out in pain.

"What are you doing?"

Abraham turned his face to him.

The angel said to him: "What are you doing? *Lay not thy hand upon the lad"* (Gen. 22:12).

Abraham said to him: "Who art thou?"

"I am an angel."

"When the Holy One, blessed be He, told me to offer my son, He spoke to me Himself, therefore now if He wants, He himself will speak to me." Suddenly the Holy One, blessed be He, broke open the firmament and the thick darkness, and said to him: *By Myself have I sworn* (Gen. 22:16).

Abraham said to Him: "Thou hast sworn, and I too have sworn that I shall not descend from this altar until I have said all that I must."

He said to him: "Speak!"

Abraham said to Him: "Did you not thus say to me, *Count the stars. . . . So shall thy seed be?"* (Gen. 15:5).

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"From Isaac."

"Did you not say to me: *And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth?* (Gen. 13:16).

"Yes."

"From whom?"

"From Isaac."

"Just so could I have answered You and said to You: Yesterday You said to me: *For in Isaac shall seed be called to thee* (Gen. 21:12). Now You say to me: *Offer him there for a burnt-offering* (Gen. 22:2). I overcame my evil impulse, and I did not answer Thee.

"So, when the children of Isaac shall sin and be led astray, let the binding of Isaac be remembered for them, and consider it as if his dust were gathered on this altar, and be filled with mercy for them and forgive them and redeem them from their sorrows."

And the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "You have spoken yours and I shall speak mine: The children of Isaac are destined to sin before me, and I shall judge them on Rosh Hashanah, but if they seek that I forgive them, I shall remember for their sake the binding of Isaac: let them blast on the horn of this."

"What horn?"

"Turn around," and forthwith, *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and behold, a ram* (Gen. 22:13).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON THE HORIZON

MARTY AND HIS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

The "Little Man" of the 50's

GERALD WEALES

MARTY, a quiet little movie about an unprepossessing young man who at last finds a girl, as plain and as lonely as he is, with whom he can share his loneliness, has become a commercial and critical success. In Europe it received a standing ovation and the Golden Palm as the best film at the Cannes International Film Festival this past spring. It even received a favorable notice in *Pravda*, according to an AP report in the New York *Times* (May 31, 1955), which must be some kind of mark of distinction for a film that, despite its sentimental depiction of the "little man," is so obviously free of social message. So much acclaim might well make the viewer a little suspicious, but *Marty* is, in fact, quite a good movie despite a number of minor faults.

Although the acting (there are excellent performances by Ernest Borgnine as Marty and Joseph Mantell as his friend Angie) and Delbert Mann's direction are partly responsible for the quality of the film, the movie is recognizably the work of Paddy Chayefsky, who wrote the screen play, an extension of his television script. Chayefsky, one of the most successful television dramatists, has recently dignified his profession by publishing a collection of scripts, *Television Plays*, with extensive notes. A glance at the book and the few Chayefsky scripts the Philco-Goodyear Playhouse has produced since the collection was prepared indicates that *Marty* is typical of its author's work in its realistic setting, its lower-middle-class characters, and its domestic stiuation.

Marty, whose last name is Pilletti, is a butcher in a neighborhood shop in the Bronx. His name, his job, his surroundings are Chayefsky identification marks. With the exception of *The Big Deal*, which takes place in Toledo, although it still sounds like the Bronx, all Chayefsky's plays take place in or near New York. He was raised in the Bronx and obviously has an ear not only for the speech patterns of New York City, but for the nuances of family life. Sometimes his characters are Italian, as in *Marty*, sometimes Jewish, as is the author, and sometimes Irish. It makes little difference whether the characters reach for a cup of coffee, a glass of tea, or a drop of whisky, because the essential ingredient is the same. Since Chayefsky deals almost completely in domestic affairs, he must present a group in which a sense of family is still strong even if the particular situation is one in which the family relationship is crippling. For the most part, the stories are interchangeable; for instance, *The Catered Affair*, a play in which a mother

---

THE success of the movie "Marty" has drawn attention to a new luminary in the field of popular drama, Paddy Chayefsky, TV playwright and movie scenarist. The publication of his TV plays in book form (*Television Plays*, Simon & Schuster, 268 pp., $3.75) has afforded GERALD WEALES the opportunity to examine and comment on Chayefsky's dominant motifs and methods. Mr. Weales, who contributed a review of Clifford Odets's play "The Flowering Peach" to our July 1955 issue, will teach English at Wayne University this coming year. Born in Indiana, he received his B.A. and M.A. at Columbia, and has done articles and reviews for *Hudson Review*, *Commonweal*, the *Nation*, and other periodicals. At present he is writing a book on religion in modern English drama.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wants to make up for what she thinks has been her neglect of her daughter by giving her an elaborate wedding, would have made as much sense had the family been Jewish instead of Irish. Nor do Chayefsky's characters go much higher on the social scale than Marty, the butcher. His protagonists have included a taxicab driver, a bookkeeper, a compositor, and once, in a burst of professionalism, a dentist.

THE New York setting is necessary for Chayefsky, as he pointed out in an interview with Vincent Tovell of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (to be presented on the program "Anthology" later this month) because it is a setting that he knows and feels comfortable in. He apparently feels that if he can give a character verisimilitude by identifying the street on which he lives, the theater he attends, the stores at which he shops, he can more easily go on to give him psychological reality. Certainly his scripts contain a great amount of local material. Marty and Clara walk by the RKO Chester when they leave the dance hall in which they meet; Marty and his friends talk about going to Loew's Paradise or to the burlesque in Union City, or to see what they can pick up on Seventy-second Street. The subway stops are identified in *Holiday Song* and *Catch My Boy on Sunday;* the bride-to-be in *The Catered Affair* meets her girl friend for a sundae at Krum's, and an inserted shot of the front of the store underlines the accuracy for the local-colorists in the audience.

This kind of actuality is harmless, even amusing to those members of the audience who recognize the plants, so long as it does not become a preoccupation which restricts the characters emotionally as well as geographically to West Farms Road. So far Chayefsky has avoided such insistence, but there are occasional exchanges in *Marty* which bear too heavily the stamp of the moment.

A more genuine kind of localism, the one for which Chayefsky has been most widely praised, is his command of the Bronx idiom. It is not what his characters have to say, but the intonation, the structure of the sentences, the choice of words and phrases that indicate their origin. For the most part, Chayefsky has sense enough to avoid slang that is too recent to be a bona fide part of the speech pattern. None of the scripts reads as well as it would play, but the lines are there for an actor to bring to life. A playwright who attempts to write down the sounds, unless he knows as much about phonetics as George Bernard Shaw did, is almost certainly going to write dialogue that looks as silly as the stage accents with which Eugene O'Neill burdened plays like *The Hairy Ape*. Chayefsky could have written like Mr. Dooley, T. A. Daly, or Milt Gross in an attempt to make the reader see the sound of the speeches, but for the most part he avoids that literary pitfall; as it is, there are enough phrases like "oughtta" and "alla way" to make the scripts annoying to read.

The main danger in a fondness for a particular kind of speech is the failure to see the thin line between reproduction and parody. The New York City accent, made up as it is from so many sources, often as rich and effective as it can be raucous, has had so much fun poked at it on stage, in the movies, on the radio, that it is sometimes difficult for a writer operating in that genre to keep from writing skits in stage Jewish or stage Irish. There is one comic bit in *Marty* that is vaudeville and no more, a conversation between two Irish women in a bar. Their dialogue is a set joke that has no relevance to the story of Marty or to the movie in general and, despite the fact that the scene has received some praise as a bit of comic reality, the ladies are extremely false and even their accent becomes stagy.

Since Chayefsky's main concern is the emotional situation with which his play deals, he does well to avoid too much of this kind of excrescence. He says in the CBC broadcast that "people don't care where it [the story] is set as long as they recognize it," and if he continues to focus his attention on problems that have a universal quality his Bronx could be as valuable to him as Dublin is to O'Casey.

SINCE loneliness is not a state limited to Fordham Road, Marty becomes a sympathetic character as soon as Chayefsky (with Borgnine's help) makes clear that Marty's unhappiness is genuine, that it is not a stage convention being used to set up a phony romance. When Marty is given depth, which is achieved dramatically by showing his single state in conjunction with the ideas of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his mother, his friend Angie, and the youthful lecher Ralph, his relationship with Clara becomes touching. Writing for television has taught Chayefsky, as he says in his notes, to focus attention mainly on one or two characters and to present them in a situation in which the events are ordinary and the drama, what there is of it, is internal.

In most of his scripts the plot ("the urgency," as he calls it) is the exploration of a familiar relationship—parent to child, husband to wife—and the results of that relationship. In *The Mother* a daughter tries to get her active energetic mother to settle calmly into a useless old age in the hope that somehow, in the course of caring for the dependent mother, she will receive from the latter the love that she never thought she had had as a child. In *The Bachelor Party* a young husband and father-to-be who has begun to feel trapped finds in the course of an evening with the boys that his marriage has meaning. In *Catch My Boy on Sunday* a mother tries to push her child into a career as a television actor so that she can get vicariously the attention she never received from an indifferent father. Reduced to one-sentence summaries, the plots sound like standard situations straight out of the psychiatric social worker's case book. Occasionally, they sound that way in the reading too.

Chayefsky is best when he lets his story tell itself in dramatic terms, when he avoids excess of explanation, when he focuses on his characters who are, after all, largely inarticulate. Since he cannot do so consistently, a script occasionally becomes heavy and stagy and has to be lifted by the actors. There is a preposterous schoolteacher in *Catch My Boy on Sunday,* for instance, who explains everything to the father in a way that no respectable teacher would; it is not the schoolteacher, but the author speaking, and he is saying to the audience precisely what he is afraid he has not successfully shown by indirection. When Marty suddenly realizes that he wants to call Clara and that the superior, disenchanted young men around the bar are wrong, he says all that needs to be said in a few sentences that do not violate his character; but the speech that Charlie makes at the end of *The Bachelor Party,* a long encomium on marriage, beats a dead dog, for the emptiness of the boys' search for fun has been shown dramatically.

Occasionally, in describing what he is trying to do, Chayefsky gets fashionably pretentious. He says, "In *Marty,* I ventured lightly into such values as the Oedipal relationship, the reversion to adolescence by many 'normal' Americans, and the latent homosexuality of the middle class." This is a tall order, even for light venturing. Still, in a sense, he is accurate. Marty's dependence on his mother might well be Oedipal and his dependence on Angie could possibly be homosexual; in his relation to both of them and to Clara he may well be a thirty-five-year-old adolescent. Chayefsky insists that *Marty* is not a study in abnormality and, of course, it is not. He brings all this up to show that on television it is possible to suggest what would only be viable on the stage if it were drawn broadly and specifically. He is probably pushing the intimacy of television a little too far; it is possible to suggest the custard pie of homosexuality on stage without hitting the audience in the face with it as Tennessee Williams does in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,* a lamentable play that sounds like a parody of some of his earlier, better work. Since most supposedly normal people sometimes behave in a way that could be labeled neurotic or even psychotic, Chayefsky does himself a disservice by insisting on what is, after all, only part of a more complete picture.

Chayefsky also says of *Marty* that it is "a comment on the social values of our times," a remark that has more immediate validity than the suggestions quoted in the paragraph above. Marty lives in a community which puts a primary value on marriage, as is clear from the opening scenes in the butcher shop, and in a relationship with his single friends which demands that they approve his choice of a bride. These two forms of social pressure, the first most strongly presented in his mother, the second in Angie, exacerbate Marty's own sense of inadequacy. The film also examines the place in society of the widowed mother whose marrying children leave her no family to take care of. And it has something to say about the conventional mores that set up the pattern of approach in sex, love, and marriage.

Although *Marty* touches on such a variety of social situations, it cannot be said to have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

social significance in the sense that the plays of the 30's had. Social pressures do affect the individual in the solving or the recognizing of his own problem, but only in passing does Chayefsky indicate that something might be wrong with the society that puts on the pressure. Despite his admiration for Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller, among other playwrights, Chayefsky accurately describes his attitude in the CBC interview: "I just can't buy social resolutions any more."

There is, however, a social, as well as a psychological, view of the world in the sadness, even the desperation, that pervades all the Chayefsky scripts, even the comedies. This atmosphere is obviously a hangover from the 30's when the political order of the day called for a tired, lugubrious setting. Now the political significance is gone and the sadness, seen through the eyes of Freud instead of Marx, serves as a reminder that Marty Pilletti and Willy Loman have joined Phil the Fiddler as acceptable figures of popular culture.

Chayefsky's lower-middle-class characters are not even particularly beset by economic difficulties; the only economic problem that the author returns to with any regularity (in his notes) is that of the television writer, and even that is a relative one when one considers that Chayefsky probably makes more on a single script than most college instructors do in a year's teaching. It is true that Marty has to decide whether or not to buy the butcher shop; that Charlie in *The Bachelor Party* is afraid the expected child will mean he can never get the schooling that will jump him from bookkeeper to accountant; that the father in *The Catered Affair* is worried about how the proposed grand wedding will bite into the money he has been saving to buy his own taxi. Yet the economic problems, like the social ones, are tangential. Only in *Printer's Measure,* where the old compositor's job is threatened by the linotype, is the economic problem closely mixed with the personal one, and even here the emphasis is on the personal.

In only one sense can Chayefsky's plays be said to make a specific social point, and that is by omission rather than by direct statement. Although he deals with a community in which a number of groups mix, there is never any indication—except for the rock through the synagogue window in *Holiday Song,* his first script—of friction among them. There are, in fact, many indications of amiability. Marty, in telling Clara about the death of his father, mentions that the news was brought by a friend of his father and adds, almost as an afterthought, "a Jewish fellow." In *The Mother,* when the old woman reports for work to the Tiny Tots Sportswear Co., Inc., she takes part in a scene that mixes Irish, Jewish, Negro, and Puerto Rican workers in a happy union. Certainly such groups do live and work side by side at least in toleration. Still, there are flare-ups, differences which are inevitably given group definition.

Harriet Arnow, in her novel *The Dollmaker,* deals with a Detroit neighborhood in which families with different religious, racial, and national origins live in a kind of open neighborliness that breaks from time to time into obscene and angry bigotry. Mrs. Arnow's picture has more basic honesty than Chayefsky's, but then she is working as a novelist and has more freedom than Chayefsky, who must respect all kinds of television taboos. It is unlikely that the advertising agency, which has an important voice in the final form of any television script, would allow any gratuitous suggestion of bigotry unless the author and director could build a strong defense for it. It is probable that the network itself, almost as sensitive as the agencies, would prefer not to show any kind of group friction, except in a script in which that friction is underlined and damned, a position that may be morally strong, but is artistically weak. Perhaps Chayefsky considers that prejudice and group discord are irrelevant to the kind of stories he has to tell, but they are certainly no more irrelevant than the intrusive chumminess that is occasionally displayed. Whoever is responsible for the omission, the result is a Pollyanna-ish sunniness suffusing an otherwise carefully delineated milieu, a breach in the realism of which the author is so fond.

CHAYEFSKY returns again and again to the matter of realism. For him the term implies not only that his characters should speak in their peculiar accents and live on recognizable streets, but that they should be forced to deal only with problems they would be likely to meet. For this reason he avoids the murders, suicides, plagues, and myriad

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dramatic events that have always filled novels, plays, and films. The most outrageous act of violence in the Chayefsky canon is in *Printer's Measure,* in which the compositor destroys the linotype with a sledge hammer. Chayefsky does not even like to do violence to logic by allowing a character to appear in a room in which he would be unlikely to have reason for entering; for that reason he believes that television, with its multiple sets, allows for a realism the stage cannot reach.

Chayefsky's realism is part of a respectable tradition going back to the origins of modern drama in Europe and to the Group Theater in this country, but he has dispensed with the overt social message that was their concomitant. He mentions *Death of a Salesman* as the closest thing to reality on the stage, and yet his *The Big Deal,* the script that comes closest to Miller's play, is, on his own admission, his stagiest work. He has cinematic antecedents in the documentary school, but the transference of that technique to American fiction films has focused on material that would be foreign to Chayefsky's intention, being used, for instance, in films like *Boomerang* centering on violence, and often in straight crime movies.

WHATEVER his antecedents and allegiances in earlier dramatic and cinematic techniques, whatever his debt to urban regional writing, whatever his dependence on the television medium for the control of his realism, Chayefsky has developed a style that is personal and impressive. None of his scripts, not even *Marty,* is without defects; some of them, like the gimmicky *Holiday Song* and the derivative *The Big Deal,* have only incidental merit. But if his notes are at all indicative of the way he thinks, he is honestly critical of his own work. He is adept at handling language and aware of innately dramatic situations in otherwise commonplace surroundings. He has produced one good movie and some television scripts that are certainly as good as any the medium has uncovered. Still, he appears to be completely wedded to his narrow realism, a strength that may finally be his weakness.

Those who think that television drama, such as Chayefsky's, is the American drama of the 50's (and the feebleness of Broadway in the last few years gives them cause to think so) do not always realize that realism has gone to television by default. That medium, which wears its "spectaculars" with such gaucheness and murders fantasy with the blunt edge of literalness (for instance, the musical version of Thurber's *The Thirteen Clocks*), handles the close-in quality of Chayefsky's plays with great skill. In the movies, however, realism appears to be out of fashion. It is not simply that Hollywood has turned again to the Biblical and historical spectacle (as has England and Italy), but our serious film makers, such as William Wyler and John Huston, use their cameras to go beyond simple realism, to suggest values that are evanescent and intangible. In *The Night of the Hunter,* the new film which Charles Laughton directed for Paul Gregory, there is even a not-quite-successful attempt at extreme stylization. *Marty* has few qualities that are specifically cinematic; it is essentially a filmed television play. Part of its impact probably lies in the simple fact that it knows what it is trying to do and does it with an assurance unusual in a time when many film makers are working uncertainly toward something more.

On the stage, too, there is the same feeling that realism is not enough. The operatic direction of Elia Kazan and the athleticism of Joshua Logan; the shouting sexuality of playwrights like Williams and Inge; the development of a highly stylistic, somewhat nerve-wracking acting style by Marlon Brando out of Actors Studio; even the reversion to turn-of-the-century melodrama in overstuffed items like *Anastasia,* are, regardless of their merit, part of the same trend.

Chayefsky is now at work on a full-length play; it will be interesting to see if the author's concept of realism, which has strength on television, becomes a dwarf on stage. Chayefsky's reduction of traditional realism to the narrowest possible limits makes, at the moment, for vital television drama, and his undeniable ability in handling the form gives him stature in that medium. But with the continued insistence on "little people," and the similarity of basic situation which is already evident in his work, there is the danger that his realism will be reduced to inconsequence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE STUDY OF MAN

SOCIAL MOBILITY AGAIN—AND ELITES

A European View

HERBERT LUETHY

IN THE article "Class and Opportunity in Europe and the United States" (COMMENTARY, December 1954), Seymour Martin Lipset and Natalie Rogoff, comparing recent findings on social mobility in the United States on the one hand, and in a number of European countries on the other, defined "social mobility" as the ease with which an individual can pass from one social class into another—or rather the ease with which he can quit his parents' socio-economic class and enter a new one. To compare the results of the different inquiries, it was necessary for the authors to simplify their statistical data and categories to a very great extent. For there are some thirty-six ways of measuring social mobility. Should one or several generations be taken into account? Just males or both sexes? Should the purview of the study be limited to fathers and and sons alone, or should it embrace wider relationships? Then, too, the number, character, and ranking of the categories employed necessarily make a difference.

In the Lipset-Rogoff study, to facilitate comparison, the number of categories was reduced to three: "farm," "manual," and "non-manual," which correspond almost exactly to the groups called "primary," "secondary," and "tertiary" in the studies of Colin Clark in England and of Jean Fourastié in France. Let me reproduce the most important table from the Lipset-Rogoff study, which makes a comparative summary of social mobility data for the United States, France, and Germany:

Father's Occupation	Son's Occupation		
	Non-Manual	Manual	Farm
	United States		
Non-manual: 100%	71	25	4
Manual: 100%	35	61	4
Farm: 100%	23	39	38
	France		
Non-manual: 100%	73	18	9
Manual: 100%	35	55	10
Farm: 100%	16	13	71
	Germany		
Non-manual: 100%	80	20	—
Manual: 100%	30	60	10
Farm: 100%	12	19	69

Thus, the third horizontal line of the table shows that of 100 sons of American farmers, 38 remained in agriculture and 39 went into the manual and 23 into the non-manual occupations.

THIS mass shift of the sons of American farmers to manual and non-manual occupations is without parallel in Western Europe. The number of farm workers is decreasing at an incomparably faster rate in America than in Europe. But aside from this fact—which is not at all to be explained by the greater "openness" of American social groups but by "the ability of the expanding American urban economy to absorb much larger numbers of the

---

IN THIS critique of the "very American" science of sociology, the Swiss historian and political analyst, HERBERT LUETHY, raises the question of the pertinence of the discipline's statistical methods and laws to the problems presented by European society. Is sociology attempting, presumptuously, to answer problems properly in the domain of history, economics, or social philosophy? Mr. Luethy, a familiar contributor to COMMENTARY, is author of the recently published *France Against Herself* (Praeger). He last appeared in these pages with "What Western 'Colonialism' Gave to Asia" (June).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sons and daughters of the American countryside"—the similarity of the statistics is striking. It appears that France and the United States do not differ in the slightest when it comes to the *ease* with which one can shift from manual to non-manual work—meaning by "ease" the absence of all "artificial" (social and traditional) barriers to advancement by personal ability and energy. The authors verify this conclusion by comparing several European and American studies of particular localities in which they found no marked difference between the "social mobility" of the population of Aarhus (Denmark) and that of Indianapolis (Indiana), or for that matter between the frequency of intermarriage between different social groups in Bavaria and in Philadelphia. The conclusion is clear: these tables "refute any claim that social mobility in the United States is on the whole markedly greater than in Europe, where family status allegedly limits positions open to sons."

At first sight the result is surprising. One is gratified to learn that our "old" European societies have remained as mobile as the "young" society of the United States. But then a thought comes to trouble one's complacency. What if the very same sociologists, with the same baggage of methods and measuring instruments, were to go to the Indies or to Peru, or back in time from the New to the Old China, from Soviet Russia to the land of the Czars of the 19th or even of the 13th century, or to ancient Greece? What then? Perhaps they would always turn up with the same coefficient of "social mobility," the variations being always attributable not to the "closed" or "open" character of classes, but to the economic character and over-all composition of society—for it is evident that in a preponderantly agricultural country, for example, with a population composed nine-tenths of farmers, nine out of ten sons of farmers will perforce become farmers, too, independently of the strength of "caste exclusiveness."

When the interpretation of statistical evidence ends with results that give the lie to accepted views, it is well to be critical of accepted views, but it is also a good idea to look somewhat more closely at the statistics. Now there are not only thirty-six *ways* of measuring social mobility; there are as many *types* of social mobility itself. There are slow evolutions, continuing for several generations, and there are sudden leaps; one may study the rise and fall of families and groups, or the individual careers of self-made men; one can change one's class by acquiring wealth, or learning a profession, or by marriage. One type of social mobility can be charted on a map, another in the social register, and a third on the family tree, and the social scientist embraces all these varieties of social movement in one category and generalization at the risk of emptying his results of any precise meaning.

THE very notion of "social mobility" has an American origin. The maintenance of a high degree of "social fluidity" has been an obsession of American sociologists ever since the conquest of the frontier and the winning of the West, when extensive had to make way for intensive expansion. The question, as raised, was whether America would be able to maintain its dynamism, or would it slowly be transformed into a "rigid," "stratified" society, with "static" classes, on the order of Europe? The notion of mobility, then, by its very origin, is invested with a positive meaning; a high degree of social mobility is proof of health, youth, and prosperity; a decline in mobility is a symptom of social sclerosis. As long as there is mobility—no matter in what direction—all is well.

But is this necessarily true? Do not disorder and decadence also imply social movement without signifying social health? Are we to suppose that the rate of social mobility at the time of the great migrations of the European peoples was less than that of the period of the Crusades? On reflection, indeed, it would not be so surprising if social mobility in the doddering and sclerotic Old World turned out to be greater than in young and bustling America. If the United States, in a mere two decades, has known booms and busts, great internal migrations, the displacements of economic centers from one region to another, a New Deal, and a general rise in the standard of living, Europe in the same space of time has known total war, revolutions, deportations, genocide, purges and counter-purges, inflations, the slow or sudden ruin of whole social classes, expropriations, nationalizations and denationalizations, deep depressions and startling recoveries—and all this accompanied by the rupture of economic ties between Eastern and Western Europe and the splitting of the Continent into two economic rumps, the decline or fall of European empires, and the lowering of Europe's economic position in the world. Each new chapter of this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tumultuous and often insensate story has seen new masters and owners come forward, and the old take their places in the ranks of the dispossessed.

If our statistically-minded sociologists were to compare the "coefficients of social mobility" of the "inter-class movement" in the United States, land of economic dynamism, with those in Western Germany, which has had to "digest" eight million refugees from the East (one uprooted and declassed newcomer for every five or six inhabitants), and were then obliged to conclude, on the basis of the figures, that the two societies were equally "vital," the insufficiency of a merely statistical account of European social reality would be plain for all to see. Moreover, the behavior of the European "average man," of whatever country and social class, would often actually seem to be a defensive reaction against too rapid and unsettling a rate of "social mobility." The constant obsession of the European, nowadays, is with security and stability. By placing himself under the protection of trade unions or the state, he wishes to secure himself against all risks. Social immobility is not his nightmare, it is his dream.

Then what meaning is there to this abstract notion of "social mobility"? What characterizes American society in its "postwar revolution" is not so much the passage of large numbers of individuals from one class to another, but rather (1) the social ascent of whole classes that previously were at the bottom of the heap, (2) a general rise in the standard of living, and (3) the multiplication of opportunities open to individuals at every level of society. Within this general movement of society as a whole, there is also a movement of individuals from class to class; this may be an interesting phenomenon, especially for the light it sheds on the relative "openness" of the various social groups, but is of quite secondary significance. In a society that is *not* itself expanding, the "coefficient of social mobility" may be the same as in one that is, while having the very opposite meaning: instead of progress, it may signify social disorder and savage internecine struggle.

The general movement of economy and population, the changing proportions of professional and social groups—like the oft-mentioned movement from production to organization and distribution, from "primary" (farm) to "secondary" (manual) and "tertiary" (non-manual) work, a movement fundamental to modern industrial societies—is best measured by the more classic means of population censuses and production, employment, and revenue statistics. American sociology has heaped refinement on refinement, to the point of isolating "pure social mobility": i.e., that degree or margin of mobility which exists independently of the historical expansion or contraction of the economy's occupational structure, and is thus not due to over-all changes in job opportunities, but entirely to individual causes. But such a distinction seems quite artificial, for the interdependence of the two phenomena would seem quite evident.

This coefficient of "absolute" social mobility, which has the air of a great novelty, takes us back, in fact, to the old problem of "elites" that has so long occupied social philosophers. This problem is constituted by that minority of "born chiefs and pioneers" who do not inherit positions of leadership but win their way to them. The freedom and rapidity with which such "elites" climb to the top of the social ladder is, according to Wilfredo Pareto and his disciples, the criterion by which societies are to be judged as innovating or conservative, "open" or "closed."

Elites, those "children of original character and initiative," the ferment of all social change, seem, according to M. Tritsch (in *Preuves*, September 1952), who bases his argument on inquiries conducted by UNESCO, to make up a "probably biological" constant of 5 per cent in all human groups. It is, to be sure, interesting to attack this old problem with instruments of a new and scientific precision, but unhappily one must question the precision itself of these instruments. One cannot but be suspicious of laws, "biological" or what have you, that emerge from the files of "social research projects" by a miracle of strict interpretation of the imprecise and ambiguous data usually accumulated by such projects. The wildest mystifications, like the fascist theories of "racial elites," have been constructed out of such pseudo-scientific materials.

There is doubtless a molecular movement inside the social body that goes on independently of the general movement of society, even when the latter seems at a standstill. But what we have here are "exceptional cases" that are not part of established social groupings; if society sets too many obstacles in the way of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

careers outside the regular channels to eminence, exceptional individuals will turn against its institutions. This is a marvelous theme for social philosophy, but hardly one that statistical tables and curves can cope with. It is the very character of exceptional cases to escape classification; they represent a "percentage" that can never be determined. One can only measure safely what *is*, not what might be. Sociology can, at least approximately, note down a certain number of careers falling outside the regular pattern, but to try to uncover the multiple and often secret factors that cause individuals to take special and exceptional paths—among which factors innate genius is certainly neither the sole nor the numerically most important one—is to venture into the field of the unmeasurable and violate the limits of the statistical method—it is to succumb, in short, to that delirium for putting everything into statistics which characterizes certain kinds of sociological inquiry.

All the more so, since the notion of an elite is essentially ambiguous. There is not just *one* elite. There are potentially as many elites as there are possible social situations. There are elites of war and elites of peace, of revolution and of social stability; there are elites among the police and the bureaucrats, among economic planners and among the businessmen of a free enterprise system; there are elites of gangsters and elites of artists, of violence and of civilization. Every society, giving free rein to some, represses others, in accordance with its system of values and the stability of its structure. It may well be that the percentage of "initiators," and the freedom of movement (degree of social mobility) allowed this minority, are constants of history and remain the same in every society. But then there would have to be some sort of "indeterminate constant," thanks to which human society escapes subjection to mathematical laws and finds its necessary minimum of freedom.

American sociology was conceived and developed as a useful, indeed utilitarian, science, in response to the New World's concern to integrate all the heterogeneous contributions of the many traditions, races, and nations making up the American people; it resolutely became a science of social adaptation, a type of "social engineering," and its constant and highly developed inquiry into social mobility has the aim of controlling the temperature of the melting pot lest it fall below the boiling point. But when its methods are applied to problems as different as those raised by European society, as in the Lipset-Rogoff study in part, there is a serious danger of its elaborate findings turning out to be very nearly pointless.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS FROM READERS

A New German Jewish Community?

To the Editor of Commentary:

In Terence Prittie's penetrating article "How New Is the 'New' Germany?" (June) he also reviews the "Jewish Problem" which continues to haunt the Germans. It is unfortunate that Mr. Prittie, obviously relying on one Jewish source only, does not tell the full story.

About his statement that "official" Jewish policy was reversed in 1949 on the question whether there should be a new Jewish community in Germany, everybody versed in this matter knows that a variety of opinions existed among Jews. Possibly Mr. Prittie is referring to various resolutions of the World Jewish Congress on this matter; but even at the World Jewish Congress plenary session in 1948 at Montreux, where German Jews were represented and which was understandably full of much emotional recrimination against Germany, no decision was taken that Jews should not remain in Germany. Moreover, in April 1950 the World Jewish Congress sent a representative to Germany who helped to consolidate what was left of the Jewish communities.

If we are unable to speak of a new flourishing Jewish community in Germany, this is less because of political resolutions than demographic facts. The microscopic character of the present Jewish community in Germany was recently revealed in a statement by the Central Council of Jews in Germany reminding the German public that a community of nearly 600,000 had dwindled away "to less than 25,000."

Mr. Prittie's contention that the average age of the Jews in Germany has decreased from sixty (1950) to forty-six (1955) would seem erroneous. *The American Jewish Year Book* of 1955 (p. 368), speaking of the Jewish population in Germany, says: "It was estimated that more than half the total population was past 50. Teenagers were a rarity and no more than 2,500 could be found in the 20 to 30 age group, while those who had passed their sixtieth birthday exceeded 7,000.'"

It is true that the birth rate among Jews was high in the postwar period, especially in the DP camps. Yet it should not be overlooked that the approximately 10,000 DP's who chose to remain in Germany are in many respects hard-core cases, among them more than 2,000 who need institutional care.

Under these circumstances I believe it is unrealistic to speak, as Mr. Prittie does, of a reconsolidation of a German Jewish community. The 23,000 Jews who remained in Germany are evenly divided between German Jews and former DP's. Of the German Jews, many have married non-Jews and their children are being educated in the religion of the non-Jewish spouse. Some German politicians of Jewish descent do not belong to the Jewish community at all.

Another, not less important factor is the inability of many Jews living in small German cities to practice and express their Jewishness. The Joint Distribution Committee in Munich showed me a list detailing the distribution of their funds, and I found to my astonishment that there were only one to three Jewish families resident in some 150 German cities. Other cities, like Augsburg, have a community of twenty souls. How is a consolidation possible under such circumstances?

There are different figures as to the circulation of the *Juedische Allgemeine Wochenzeitung*. In contrast to Terence Prittie's 70,000, *Der Leitfaden*, the recognized handbook of the German press, listed the *Juedische Allgemeine* in 1951 with a circulation of 4,000; in 1953, with 26,000, and the official Bulletin of the German Press mentioned only 48,000 last year. . . .

The Jewish community in Germany has also decreased by emigration and natural causes, notwithstanding the fact that a few hundred or even a few thousand Jews visit West Germany yearly in connection with their restitution and indemnification claims. Even this number decreases annually with the death of elderly German Jews.

I cannot see any sense in fostering illusions about the existence of a flourishing new Jewish community in Germany. Not that I would be opposed to it; but we should be realistic in recognizing that Hitler and his cohorts were thorough and made the rebirth of a Jewish community in Germany impossible.

Kurt R. Grossman

Kew Gardens, New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MR. PRITTIE *writes:*

The points raised by Mr. Grossman in connection with my article "How New Is the 'New' Germany?" are interesting and require detailed answer. Mr. Grossman has, however, prefaced them by remarking that I have "obviously" relied on one source alone for my information. This is not correct. The two most "obvious" sources of information in Germany, of course, are the Jewish Central Council and the Jewish weekly, the *Allgemeine*. The Joint Distribution Committee has also had representatives in Germany and there are private German citizens who are Jews. I have not, therefore, relied on a single source.

The world Jewish press will, if consulted, indicate most clearly that Jewish policy up to 1949 was to evacuate the Jews still left in Germany. No official decision to this effect was framed at the World Jewish Congress in Montreux in 1948, but this must be ascribed to tactical reasons. In 1950 the Congress sent Dr. Jacoby to Germany to study the problems of Jews still there. His extensive study of them led to recommendations that the Jewish communities in Germany should be refounded and consolidated.

Mr. Grossman's figure of "less than 25,000" members left in the Jewish communities in Germany is close to the mark. It could be just over, or just under 25,000. But there are around 11,000 other Jews—mainly of German origin—at present in Germany who do not belong to the Jewish communities. It must be regarded as likely that many of them will join the Jewish communities as confidence in Germany's political future grows.

The Jewish *Allgemeine* believes that latest statistics give an average age in the Jewish communities of around forty-six. The *American Jewish Year Book* produced only estimates but even these indicated pretty clearly that the average age had dropped well below sixty—since only 7,000 out of 25,000 Jews in Germany were over that age.

The birth rate in the Jewish communities is fairly constant and has not, as Mr. Grossman suggests, dropped since the first postwar years. Mr. Grossman's figure of 2,000 needing institutional care is probably too high. The Jewish *Allgemeine* has given me a figure of 600-700 only. This excludes the 1,200 still in Foehrenwald camp, who do not belong to the communities. There are undoubtedly more German Jews than former Jewish DP's of other nationalities now living in Germany.

The question of mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews cannot be as easily resolved as Mr. Grossman claims. Members of the Jewish communities claim the opposite to Mr. Grossman: that such marriages are leading to most of the children being brought up in the Jewish faith.

Naturally some Jews are living virtually isolated in German villages and small towns. There is nothing new about this. Jewish communities cannot be organized for these people. The fact is that there are thriving communities in Berlin, Frankfort, and Munich, and plenty of others with more than 500 members.

The figure of 70,000 circulation of the *Allgemeine* is a misprint and I am glad that Mr. Grossman has drawn attention to it. It is not claimed by the paper itself, whose statistics show that the Federal Government Bulletin's figure of 48,000 is correct. The 1953 figure of 26,000 given by Mr. Grossman related only to regular subscribers in Gemany, and not to over-all sales.

Certainly, my article was not intended to create the impression that a tremendous development of the Jewish communities in Germany was under way or that their "reconsolidation" was in any way final and secure. I intended instead to give what I believe is the true picture —of steady progress and of a tough struggle to rebuild what had been destroyed. I should therefore doubt very much whether Mr. Grossman is right when he says that "Hitler and his cohorts were thorough and made the rebirth of a Jewish community in Germany impossible." On the contrary, I think that such a rebirth—although slow and painful—has at least begun and has a fair chance of being carried through to a successful conclusion.

TERENCE PRITTIE

Düsseldorf, Germany

Mao and Stalin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. William Herrick, in your July issue, queried my interpretation of the relations between Mao and Stalin, on the ground that Stalin personally invested Mao with the leadership of Chinese Communism at the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928. Actually, at that Congress Stalin did nothing of the sort. The Sixth World Congress endorsed the demotion from leadership of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and his replacement by Ch'ü Ch'iu-tai. The latter in his turn was demoted the year after and replaced by Li Li-san, who in his turn, two years after, was replaced by Wang Ming. In the meantime, behind the back of both Moscow and of Wang Ming, Mao with the help of Chu Teh acquired real control in the Kiangsi partisan area and later in the Chinese Communist party as a whole. The *fait accompli* of his dominant position was endorsed by the Seventh

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(not Sixth) World Congress in 1935. Mr. Herrick's seven years' error explains his misunderstanding of my presentation of the situation.

FRANZ BORKENAU

Zurich, Switzerland

Heine as "Baal T'shuvah"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Alfred Werner's quotation of Heine's Jewish "confession" to his "Eckermann" Meissner ("Heinrich Heine to His Eckermann," July) shows just *one* aspect of the poet's attitude towards Judaism. Heine's manifold and contradictory nature never appears so clearly as in this crucial problem which haunted him all through his life. But in his contradictions he is only a reflecting mirror of the various tendencies that struggled with each other in that generation, the first after Mendelssohn, divided in their interpretation of the meaning of Emancipation. It was a long way to the consolidation of the positions within and towards Judaism, whose extreme wings were represented by both Hirsches: Samuel, the Luxemburger rabbi who was more successful in the American Reform movement than he was in Europe, and Samson Raphael, who defined the modern expression of Orthodoxy.

Heine lived, in many respects, at a time when new ideas were in fermentation before finally crystallizing into political or theological parties; and this accounts for the extreme contradictoriness of his views, echoing the beliefs and opinions of contemporary Judaism in its volcanic evolution. But true disciple of Hegel that he was, his contradictions evolved out of thesis and antithesis to a spiritual synthesis, to an apotheosis of the Jewish religion which entitles him to be considered a *Baal T'shuvah* who, according to the Talmud, stands higher than ten perfect *Zaddikim*.

CH. C. LEHRMANN

Grand Rabbi
Luxemburg

Austrian Retribution to the Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The regrettably ambiguous position of the Austrian Socialists in matters of retribution to the Jews (Benno Weiser, "Unsentimental Journey to Vienna," July 1955) must not be extended to include moral responsibility for Hitler's rise in Austria in 1938. Then, as Mr. Weiser will agree, the Socialist ranks held firm while the Catholic side, strangely, collapsed.

On March 27, 1938, only two weeks after Hitler's invasion, there appeared on every street corner of the country and was read from each and every church pulpit the following declaration signed by all the archbishops and bishops of Austria, although some of them were known to be opponents of National Socialism:

"After thorough deliberation, we, the Bishops of Austria, have decided in this historic moment to issue an appeal to the faithful. . . . We do so in the realization that our thousand-year-old longing for the unification of the German people has been fulfilled. We, the undersigned Bishops for the Austrian dioceses, of our own free will do solemnly declare. . . .

"We joyfully recognize that the National Socialist movement has produced outstanding achievements. . . . On Plebiscite Day it will be for us as Bishops a self-evident duty, and a national duty, to profess ourselves as Germans and for the German Reich. We expect all faithful Christians to take cognizance of what they owe to their nation!"

In view of this declaration, it is difficult to see how the Austrian Catholic party and the Chancellor can deny reparations to the Jews on the basis of moral innocence for what happened after 1938.

HANS ZEISEL

Chicago, Illinois

[Since the receipt of Mr. Zeisel's letter, agreement on Austrian reparations to Jews has been reached, but has still to become law.—ED.]

Correction

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I draw attention to a misunderstanding which has crept into my article ("The Dilemmas of Western Aid to Free Asia") in your August number? On p. 123 the printed text suggests that some 50 per cent of the profits made in Indian private industry are *exported* from that country. What I had tried to convey was that the foreign-owned sector of Indian industry accounts for about half the net profits made. These, however, would normally be reinvested rather than exported. This does not, of course, make the situation any less serious from the standpoint of India's economic planners who are aiming at the balanced development of their country's economy.

G. L. ARNOLD

London, England

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS IN REVIEW

A Middle Way

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM: AN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT. By MARSHALL SKLARE. The Free Press. 298 pp. $4.50.

Reviewed by NATHAN GLAZER

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM is a work of the highest distinction, both as a study of American Jewish life and as a contribution to contemporary American sociology. In both these fields, ignorance, pretension, and bad writing have been so much in evidence that I feel it my first duty as a reviewer simply to say how good Marshall Sklare's book is.

The author's subject is that middle group of the three large denominations into which American Judaism is divided. In the public mind, Conservative Judaism is associated primarily with the Jewish Theological Seminary and the United Synagogue of America. Both these organizations, however, play a very small role in Mr. Sklare's account. He begins with the story of the founding of the individual congregations: the local groups of Jews of East European origin, under no authority (except that of the traditional Jewish religion), who after twenty or thirty years of settlement in this country, and after reaching a moderate degree of prosperity, found the services of the Orthodox synagogue and the demands of the Orthodox rabbis too rigorous. While they were attracted by the prestige of the Reform temple, they were either not quite comfortable in it socially, or felt that the service was too foreign. Starting for the most part in the years after the First World War, they created a modified Orthodoxy that eventually became Conservative Judaism, today perhaps the most vigorous and thriving of the three Jewish denominations.

MR. SKLARE'S approach to Conservative Judaism is quite different from that of its "official" historians, who generally trace its origins back to the "historical school" of Zechariah Frankel in Germany in the middle of the 19th century, finding the roots of Conservatism not within that part of American Jewry stemming from East Europe, but in the conservative opposition to radical Reform in Germany and America in the 19th century. This opposition—led by men like Zechariah Frankel, Alexander Kohut, and Solomon Schechter—differed from traditional Orthodoxy in accepting modern scholarship and, at least in principle, the possibility of changing and adapting Judaism to modern circumstances. It was out of this orientation that the Jewish Theological Seminary was established in New York in the 1880's, to oppose Cincinnati's flourishing Hebrew Union College, the citadel of Reform. None too strong at first, the Jewish Theological Seminary was on the verge of expiring when a great "middleman" in American Jewish life, Cyrus Adler, convinced a number of Jewish philanthropists of German origin that just such a seminary, of a more traditional cast, could educate "modern" rabbis for the East European Jewish immigrants in America and so promote their speedy acculturation.

The Seminary was therefore "re-organized" in 1901 under Solomon Schechter, with the financial aid of Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, and their friends. During the first fifteen to twenty years of this century, Mr. Sklare asserts, it was an institution without a public to serve. Aspiring young Jews from the East European immigrant milieu came there to get a "Western" finishing—and then could find no congregations that wanted a more or less traditional English-speaking rabbi. Only in the early 20's did social developments among American Jews of East European origin create the kind of synagogue that wanted the kind of rabbis being turned out by the Seminary. Then the two originally quite separate tendencies represented by the "East European" synagogues, on the one hand, and by the "German" Seminary, on the other, came together, and the Conservative movement was born.

SUCH is Mr. Sklare's account of the origins of Conservative Judaism, and I think it a correct one. However, the scope of his discussion em-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

braces much more than Conservative Judaism. The whole problem of the "ethnic church," and of Judaism in America in general, is illuminated by his discussion. He points out that religion is a vehicle of survival for ethnic groups. The pastor, or rabbi, may really be more interested in maintaining the old language and customs than the specific tenets of the faith. This point has been made before as regards American Judaism, though not, as far as I know, as well.

Another point made by Mr. Sklare is that the institutions created by an ethnic group survive, among other reasons, because they help combat the *anomie*—that is, the loneliness and loss of a sense of community—of modern life. The fact that the institution is religious in character is incidental. If American society granted as much status to non-religious ethnic organizations (*Landsmannschaften* and the like), these too would gain considerable strength because of their role in combating *anomie*. As it is, however, there is no question but that religious organizations in America have considerably more status and acceptance than organizations with only an ethnic identification. This, of course, is but one of many reasons why the religious institutions of ethnic groups are generally more flourishing than the non-religious.

Mr. Sklare's analysis of the relation between the congregations and the Seminary is particularly perceptive. Here the crucial link is, of course, the rabbi. Now there is something very special about the Conservative rabbi, vis-à-vis his Orthodox and Reform colleagues, that cannot but make him feel inferior. The Orthodox rabbi is ordained in traditional style; he is given a traditional degree, the *Semichah,* that theoretically places him on the level of his teachers and makes it possible for him to rule on matters of religious law. The Reform rabbi does not have *Semichah,* but since Reform has abandoned the Halachic basis of Judaism, this is of no consequence. The Reform rabbi, too, can consider himself the equal of his teachers, a full member of his calling. The Conservative rabbi, however, is in an anomalous position. He is not given *Semichah;* and he is regarded as being formally inferior to his teachers, who are, for the most part, rabbis with the traditional ordainment. And so, even though the problem of Jewish law is considered a serious one, since it is still authoritative in the Conservative movement, he is helpless to participate in the making of it. At the same time this dilemma remains meaningless to most of his congregants, who are as little concerned with Jewish law, generally, as Reform Jews are, and only want their rabbi to do a good job in conducting services, running the school, and managing the center.

It is, however, just in this perceptive and ingenious analysis of the position of the Conservative rabbi that one weakness in Mr. Sklare's approach seems to come to light. He narrows his canvas too much, I think, limiting it to the American situation and the American Jew. Never in his book does one find a hint that Jewish tradition also plays a role in the matter, and that this tradition leads an existence quite independent of surrounding social forms —if only an ideal existence, and if only of some consequence for a diminishing number of people. We always see Judaism, in this book, adapting itself to the social situation. Resistance—that is, the resistance of those who hold to the tradition in fuller form—is, in Mr. Sklare's presentation, a kind of pointless effort to stem and reverse an inevitable tide. The position of the Conservative rabbi, as presented in this volume, seems ludicrously unreal: he is full of a desire to keep the Halachah alive—in some way—in face of the profound and unshakable indifference of his congregants.

I am not taxing Mr. Sklare, priggishly, with failing to take "spiritual forces" into account. My point is that sociological analysis must take *all* forces into account, and the existence of a religious tradition that makes strong demands, and is still accepted by many thousands of people, is one such force.

Mr. Sklare's bias in favor of a type of analysis that sees a tradition "adapted" to a situation rather than possibly molding it, emerges at many points. It is a little surprising, for example, to read: "East European Orthodoxy . . . grew out of the peculiar conditions of East European life"—with no more qualification than that. After all, the *Shulchan Aruch*—which played no small role in East European Orthodoxy—was written by a Spanish rabbi who never set foot in East Europe. I feel Mr. Sklare is making a similar—though lesser—mistake when he writes of the Conservative rabbis and their problems with the Halachah: "The pondering of ritual problems, the consultations through the literature with the great rabbinical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1955-1956 PROGRAM
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The American Jewish Historical Society, founded in 1892 for the purpose of collecting and publishing material on the history of the Jews in America and of furthering American Jewish historical research, announces its program of activities during the academic year 1955-1956:

1. **Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting:** To be held Saturday evening, February 11 and Sunday, February 12, 1956; titles of papers to be submitted on or before October 12, 1955.

2. **Historical Essay Award:** Open to students of recognized schools of higher learning, graduate and undergraduate, without distinction of race, color or creed; essays to be submitted on or before November 1, 1955. Application form available on written request.

3. **Joint Conference of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Agency:** Theme: "Early History of Zionism in America," Monday and Tuesday, December 26-27, 1955, in New York City.

4. **Joint Meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society and the American Historical Association:** Theme: "The Impact of American Religious and Cultural Thought on American Jewry," Thursday afternoon, 2.30 o'clock, December 29, 1955, at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

5. **Jewish History Week:** April 8-15, 1956.

6. **Forthcoming Publications:**

   Volume XLV of its historical quarterly *Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society*

   Proceedings of the [1954] Conference of Historians on American Jewish History

   Monumental Inscriptions of Barbados by E. M. Shilstone, published jointly by the American Jewish Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society of England

For further information write to:

AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
3080 BROADWAY **NEW YORK 27, N. Y.**

(This advertisement has been contributed to the American Jewish Historical Society by Mr. Louis M. Rabinowitz.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minds of the past, and the writing of scholarly opinions based on precedent, must be viewed essentially as adjustive techniques helping to mediate the crisis produced by clashes in role-playing." In part, they *are* "adjustive techniques" (that is, of purely psychological significance to the rabbis, and of no significance to others); but "essentially," I am convinced, they are the necessary effort to come to grips with a great tradition. As long as it exists and is studied, and as long as Jews accept the idea that it has claims on them, developments are possible—perhaps we should say only barely possible—that Mr. Sklare's approach and analysis imply are utterly impossible.

This is, of course, the most difficult problem of any sociological approach—how, in its explanations, to incorporate formal systems of ideas like the great religions and give any weight to the explicit and ostensible content of phenomena it is inclined to reduce to social forms alone. The unique strength of the discipline of sociology lies in its going beneath formal ideologies to social movements, and explaining the actions of groups and individuals "better than they can explain it themselves"—at least better from the point of view of the uninvolved observer. And this gives rise to sociology's special weakness—what to do about ideas, what to do about what people *think* they believe? It tends too exclusively to see religions and ideologies as passive elements given by history and molded by social forces and individual needs.

I think this is Mr. Sklare's tendency, too. My own feeling is that in the relation between the Jewish tradition and the people who call themselves Jews, the tradition also plays an active role, or at least is capable of playing one. But this is, of course, a difference with the author's point of view that goes far beyond the limits of a review.

A Fossil

THE ECSTASY OF OWEN MUIR. By RING LARDNER, JR. Cameron & Kahn. 302 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by GRANVILLE HICKS

MR. LARDNER'S novel was published in England before it was published in America, by a reputable firm, and, if the quotes on the jacket can be trusted, it was well reviewed in the Manchester *Guardian*, the London *Times*, and other sober and discriminating journals. In this country it was published by a company that no one would be published by who could be published by anybody else, and, so far as I can make out, has scarcely been reviewed at all.

The discrepancy can easily be explained. First, Mr. Lardner, a successful script writer prior to 1947, was one of the "Hollywood Ten," serving nine and a half months in a Federal penitentiary for refusing to answer the questions of a Congressional committee investigating Communist influences in the motion picture industry, and this is a matter that seems more serious to American publishers and editors than it does to their British counterparts. Second, the book criticizes the Catholic Church in an outspoken, detailed, and rather vulgar way, and the Church is very powerful in the United States.

If the book does not merit the praise it has received in England, it is certainly worthy of critical attention. Even its anti-Catholicism, objectionable as it sometimes is in form, presents a challenge in substance, for it compels a critic to sort out his views on the Church. I, for instance, cannot deny Mr. Lardner's charges that there are irrationalities in the Church's views on marriage and birth control, that the Church has encouraged superstitiousness, that within the Church there are reactionaries of a frightening kind. On the other hand, some of my closest friends are Catholics, and I see in them few if any of the traits Mr. Lardner chooses to pillory. Furthermore, I find myself in agreement with much that I read in Catholic books and periodicals. I conclude therefore, that even if some of what Mr. Lardner says is true, he is a long way from the whole truth.

But perhaps I had better tell what the book is about. The leading character is the misfit son of a reactionary businessman. Turned into the paths of dissent, he becomes a pacifist and in 1942 goes to prison rather than register for the draft. But in prison he impulsively employs violence to save a Negro from an avowed fascist, and, having thus involuntarily convinced himself of the fallaciousness of pacifist theory, volunteers for combat duty. After being wounded in an act of unrecognized heroism, he is discharged from the army, and then is forced into business by his father.

At this point Owen falls in love with April

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wykoff. There are two obstacles to their marriage: she is currently living with a Communist organizer by the name of Gene Couto, and she is a Catholic. The first problem is disposed of when April expresses a preference for Owen and dismisses Gene. The second does not seem too difficult, for April's Catholicism is of a flexible sort, but again Owen's passion for consistency complicates matters. Unwilling to promise that his children will be brought up in the faith unless he is certain they ought to be, he begins to study Church doctrine. He is quickly converted and, of course, becomes exactly the kind of fanatic April is not. He wrecks their marriage when he refuses to sanction an abortion that may be necessary to save April's life.

Owen also has political troubles. As a matter of conscience he becomes active in an organization of Catholic veterans and is present at the Peekskill riot of 1949, where he is shocked by the violence of the veterans and the connivance of the police. He receives a second shock when Gene Couto, who turns out to be a secret agent of the FBI, testifies against his own mother, although he was the one who recruited her into the Communist party. For a time Owen tries to take up arms against the injustices he has been forced to recognize, but the effort is too much for him and he enters a Trappist monastery.

At first it appears that Mr. Lardner is writing a book about a young man who tries to make his actions conform to his beliefs. This is a device that writers, from Voltaire to Thornton Wilder, have used to satirize the pretensions and expose the hypocrisies of their societies, and a very effective device it can be. But after a time one perceives that Mr. Lardner has something else in mind, and, in fact, he warns the reader of this in a statement appearing on the jacket: "The shining horizon of man's destiny is shrouded in a fog of mystical obscurantism. I have chosen in this book to deal with a character so hopelessly lost in that fog that he makes his way into the past instead of the future." In short, the trouble with Owen Muir, from the author's point of view, is not that he tries to live according to the ideas he adopts but that he adopts the wrong ideas.

What the book is really about is fascism and how not to fight it. I know how implausible such a summary must sound, but it can be documented. Owen's father is not merely a narrow-minded, money-mad, Roosevelt-hating businessman; he is privately in complete agreement with Hitler. The Catholic Church, as Owen observes it, is full of fascists. Gerald Mulvaney, the self-styled fascist whom Owen slugs in the penitentiary, turns up as an employee of a Catholic veterans' organization. Monsignor Frasso, who seems to bear a considerable resemblance to Fulton J. Sheen, defends the Peekskill riot, justifying the use of fascist methods in the fight against Communism. Business, the Church, the army, and the government, as seen by Mr. Lardner, are riddled with fascism.

Aside from April, who is a special case, the only attractive character in the book is Mrs. Couto, a member of the Communist party. After she has been framed by her son, Owen goes to a meeting to raise funds for her defense. The principal speaker denounces American aggression in Korea, cites examples of "rampant fascism," and calls for a militant struggle to "prevent the subverters of democracy from launching total war against the peace-loving peoples of Asia and Eastern Europe." Owen realizes that exactly opposite views are held by millions of Americans, and he decides that, in order to act effectively, a man must choose one side or the other. It is a decision he cannot make, and that is why he ends up in a monastery.

If Mr. Lardner means that one has to choose between the Communist view of the world situation and the American view as presented in this book, then perhaps we shouldn't blame Owen for becoming a Trappist. But it is not certain that he does mean exactly that, for there is the problem of April. She is a loyal Catholic, but this does not stop her from using her own mind. She stands by her friends, whatever their politics, but she professes no fondness for Communism. She seems as incapable of being a fanatical Communist as she is of being a fanatical Catholic, and yet she is the chief object of the author's admiration.

What I am suggesting is that the book, in Mr. Lardner's mind, may not be a piece of Communist propaganda but a recommendation of a position somewhere between the two extremes as he conceives them. But one cannot be sure of this, for he still sees both Russia and America through eyes that were conditioned by long years of loyalty to the Communist cause. (This I conclude from the book itself, not from personal knowledge.) He has a real

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

satirical gift, and there are many scenes based on acute observation, but when he attempts to explain the significance of the events he is describing, he makes it clear that he is living in a world of fantasy.

How, then, does it happen that the *Times Literary Supplement* could describe the book as "an admirable blend of righteous indignation and cool observation"? I can understand why British reviewers may take satisfaction in reading about America's shortcomings, but I am surprised that so many critics failed to see this book for what it is—a fossil. Here, wonderfully preserved into the 50's, are the attitudes of the 30's. Fascism is still rampant, and the United Front is on the march for the preservation of peace and democracy. The Catholic Church is still fighting the war in Spain. And Russia is still the future that works. Time has stood still for Mr. Lardner, and the failure of British reviewers to recognize that fact is perplexing and mildly disturbing.

Democracy in Israel

ISRAEL'S EMERGING CONSTITUTION, 1948-1951. By EMANUEL RACKMAN. Columbia University Press. 196 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by JUDD L. TELLER

VIRTUALLY the only writing in English critical of Israel has been produced by anti-Zionists, Zionist writers for the most part studiously refraining from public criticism (Maurice Samuel is the most notable exception). Against this background, Dr. Rackman's book is unique, important, and bravely candid.

Dr. Rackman has undertaken to present a coherent, analytical description of Israel as a working state in terms of the legislation that governs it. He discusses the several drafts of the indefinitely deferred Israel constitution, and the principles, directions, and specific legal precedents of Israel's legislation during its first three years. He deals painstakingly with both enacted and rejected bills, and with all the debates around them. Since jurisprudence touches on almost every sphere of human endeavor, he manages to embrace within his consideration the whole complex of the new state's life—its traditions, behavior patterns, and dilemmas.

An assistant professor in political science at Yeshiva University, an officiating Orthodox rabbi, and a Zionist of the Mizrachi persuasion, Dr. Rackman writes with startling objectivity even on things as sensitive as the right relation of Israeli law to Torah, or the so-called church and state problem in Israel. This is one of two major problems affecting the very nature and future of Israel that are treated in this book. The other is the status of civil liberties in a country that has lived in a state of war since its birth seven years ago, and for this reason has vested unusual emergency powers in the executive branch of its government.

THE large area of jurisprudence known as "personal staus" law is today the exclusive province of the ecclesiastical courts in Israel; marriage, divorce, and the legitimation of offspring require the sanction of the clergy. This interrelation between civil and ecclesiastical jurisprudence has to some extent influenced even public law, as illustrated by the army's kosher kitchens and the restrictions on pig farms, and by the shutting down of harbors and airfields on the Sabbath, and the suspension of railway service and all interurban and most urban bus traffic.

However, Dr. Rackman advises liberals who urge adoption of the American pattern with respect to the relations of church and state to "consider the unique situation prevailing in Israel's legal order . . . a picture that must first be understood before panaceas can be offered." He recalls that the authority of the ecclesiastical courts was not vested in them by Israel, but dates back to a legal attitude established under the Turks and the British Mandate. He points out, moreover, that "The United Nations General Assembly resolution required that the constitution of Israel respect the law of family and personal status . . . of the several religious minorities in the new state." Hence the present *Kulturkampf* in Israel involves not only the Israelis, but also the UN, and the enactment of civil marriage and divorce in Israel might even precipitate a holy war in the Middle East. To preserve certain rights for Moslems and Christians while abolishing them for the Jews would be an incredible act of schizophrenic discrimination against irreligious Christians and Moslems, and against Orthodox Jews. And to set up, as the late Hayim Greenberg once proposed, civil courts for the general citizenry, while preserving the religious courts as semi-public institutions for those who wanted them, would, in Dr. Rackman's view, only exacerbate an already difficult situation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Should the civil courts "apply the rules of the religious courts which might have had jurisdiction over the parties, Greenberg's objections [to imposing the authority of the religious courts upon the non-religious] will not have been answered," Rackman writes. "If they apply a new and special set of rules, then there has been added to the already numerous jurisdictions a civil one which compounds the chaos in every religious community. . . ."

The American liberal should also remember, as is evident from Dr. Rackman's book, that religious marriage and divorce, which the liberal regards as an imposition in Israel, is abided by cheerfully by a majority of the Jews in America, who have free choice in the matter. This is written with due regard for the fact that conditions to which one submits by choice become offensive if imposed by law.

THE peril to civil liberties in Israel arises, as Dr. Rackman sees it, primarily from the usurpation of the prerogatives of the legislature by the executive branch, and from the absence of firm constitutional principles providing for the judiciary's intervention in such event. The Fundamental Principles of the first Knesset, for example, made freedom of speech and assembly conditional on "due regard for the security of the state, its freedom and independence, as well as respect for private rights." Dr. Rackman says that this "unfortunately is very broad," and that "it almost negates the right altogether." He is surprised that the Israelis do not seem to fear that the "extension of government action" might "lead to the decline of freedom," and that their country "might ultimately become totalitarian." He adds: "Can it be that this type of alarm prevails only in countries where the rich are numerous and can induce it? Or is it the fact that most Israelis are reconciled to the 'ingathering of exiles' and understand that to fulfill this program the state must act on many fronts?" (We have moreover seen in recent years, and most recently in the Kastner case, that the judiciary can function with real independence.)

The potential threat to liberty may be very real, but Dr. Rackman seems to be writing out of the disillusionment of American liberals with extensive social planning when he suggests that the threat derives *inherently* from the welfare state. What must really concern us, however, are his disclosures of the woeful lack of sophistication on the part of Knesset members of all parties as to things democratic. This, rather than the welfare state, is one of the sources of possible trouble. He summarizes, for example, the views expounded by Meir Grabovsky (Argov), now Mapai chairman of the Knesset Foreign Relations Committee and one of his party's chieftains, during the constitutional debate: "His misgivings about democracy caused him to urge even the curbing of freedom of expression; an unbridled press—even the unbridled use of placards—is hardly conducive to the best political education of the masses. To the use of the referendum he was violently opposed." Argov's opposition to frequent elections was sound, practically, but his arguments and principles were all wrong and echoed the sentiments of the Nativists in America in the last decades of the 19th century. Argov, according to Rackman, "asserted . . . that frequent elections and referenda would only cause them [the newcomers] to retain party loyalties acquired elsewhere instead of becoming assimilated politically into existing party frameworks." These statements reveal Argov as possessing a low democratic quotient, but an impressive capacity for political prognosis, for he clearly anticipated the reverses suffered by Mapai in the recent Knesset elections.

Dr. Rackman is on quite solid ground when he points to another source of danger to per-

WANTED:
eyes and ears

Because of its limitations, radar is not enough to safeguard this country from a sneak air attack. For complete vigilance, the eyes and ears of civilian volunteer plane spotters are needed in the Ground Observer Corps. Join today and help protect your nation and your community. Contact Civil Defense.

Wake Up! Sign Up! Look Up!

JOIN THE
GROUND OBSERVER CORPS

Call or write Civil Defense

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sonal freedom in Israel—the political parties and functionaries and their vested interests. In Israel, legislative initiative is almost wholly out of the question. Government bills generally originate, as in Britain, with the various ministries—not as a matter of law, but of practice. But under the system of proportional representation on a national scale, the legislator is not responsible to a geographically defined constituency. The Knesset member's exact place on his party's ballot determines his election and the party can lower a candidate's position on the ballot, or drop him altogether without consulting any but its own interest.

Dr. Rackman suggests that the multi-party system and the introduction of district elections might secure a more democratic procedure. Now Ben Gurion is as impatient as anyone with vested party interests, yet one cannot be certain that his grasp of democratic procedures differs radically from Argov's. He himself has inspired some of the arbitrary emergency legislation passed during the three years under review in Rackman's book. And American experience indicates that district elections can sometimes actually accelerate the corruption of democratic processes. Dr. Rackman's assumption that some such mechanical solution can secure a people against the perils inherent even in the best legislation is much too sanguine, even as he is inclined to underestimate a democratic people's ability to live within the democratic pattern no matter how loosely worded and unqualified its laws might be.

The actual perils to democratic procedure in Israel are scarcely constitutional; they are more "sociological" and historical. The East European pioneer, the Central European survivor of Nazi rule, the Oriental Jew from the *casbah*, and the sabra veterans of the struggle against Mandatory rule in Palestine, had all learned to persevere by means of a Jewish communal ethos outside the pale of governmental law. While they are quite capable of endless accommodation, they are by this time, by temperament and training, indisposed to take official law as of too serious consequence in their private or communal lives.

Another peril is the upper-echelon government bureaucracy. The party functionary, deriving his strength from the rank and file of his party, may be annoying, irritating, and even exasperating, but he is not really dangerous. The upper-echelon bureaucrat who has won

THE STRONGEST LINK

"Commentary is the strongest link between my son at college and our home and our Jewish tradition," a mother writes us. Thousands of young people have been brought to a new appreciation of our Jewish heritage through the pages of Commentary. That is why Commentary makes

An Ideal Gift

for your son or daughter at college
for your son serving in the armed forces
for the married children in their own homes

Just use the gift card enclosed in this magazine—
and take advantage of our special gift rates.

Commentary

34 West 33rd Street **New York 1, N. Y.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

favor with large sections of American Jewry may, on the other hand, become a real threat, especially since Israeli finances still depend on American generosity. This is not because Israel is a welfare state, but because, like its legislators, it has to acquire greater democratic sophistication.

Dr. Rackman's book has two defects that flow from his initial approach. He is an American liberal writing on law; hence there is an overemphasis on written law and too little emphasis on the living conditions of Israeli democracy and the patterns it projects into the future. Dr. Rackman conveys the impression, moreover, that, except as to church and state relations, Israel should transplant American legal patterns wholesale. One has to bear in mind, however, that law must be tailored to the specific needs of specific peoples, and in Israel, where half the population has lived in the country less than seven years, and where a great proportion of the population does not yet really belong to the country, the nation must be born before it can evolve a constitution. Strangely (or rather not strangely at all), the only law all Jews in Israel have in common, as a memory if not as a living experience, is religious law.

The Search for the 30's

PART OF OUR TIME. By MURRAY KEMPTON. Simon and Schuster. 334 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by LESLIE FIEDLER

I HAVE found this an oddly moving book, though it is sentimental, philistine, and a little ingenuous. As a matter of fact, it has brought me as near as I hope I shall ever come to an appreciation of those mild vices. For it is precisely his sentimentality, his ingenuousness, and his philistinism which enable Mr. Kempton to tell certain truths about the 30's—or, as he prefers to say, "the myth of the thirties." Now "myth" is a tricky word, but Mr. Kempton makes it quite clear what he wants it to mean. "Any myth," he tells us, "is the creation of the very few who cannot bear reality." And the reality intolerable to the "very few" Communists and fellow-travelers turned informer, bureaucrat, and Hollywood hack with whom his book deals is "the reality that man is alone on this earth." Mr. Kempton's victims and sufferers turned from the realization of this truth to the "myth of community," which is for him not only false but viciously false, "the malignant unreal." And those who subscribed to it can only be classified as "a little group of the sick" still (in large part) trying to convince themselves that once, for better or worse, they were the voice and conscience of the nation.

I do not want to argue here the nature of "reality," but I must insist that it is hard to see in what essential way the statement that "no man is an island" differs from the assertion that "man is alone on this earth." Both are poetic generalizations aimed at coming to terms with incoherent experience—and there is no sense in which one qualifies as a "myth" more than the other. In my book, *both* are entered as gospel. As for Mr. Kempton's contention that all those drawn toward the declared ideals of the Soviet Union in a time of depression and disenchantment were no more than a handful of the sick, an "island of guilt in a sea of innocence"—this is obviously a polemical exaggeration, prompted by the desire to neutralize an opposite exaggeration of certain repentant radicals. I am sure that it is Mr. Kempton's kindly intent to call off the dogs of the investigating committees by proving that there was never any large-scale, meaningful internal Communist threat in our country; and, it seems churlish to protest so benign a piece of apologetics. But I cannot help believing that there is more truth in the counter-proposition, the cry of a young fellow I once overheard at the point where he was being refused a commission in the navy for the political sins of his adolescence. "Hell," he shouted, "in those days anyone with guts and brains was a Communist or fellow-traveler."

Behind Mr. Kempton's temperate dismissal of the committed minority (not evil, you understand, just sick) is the philistine conviction that our major problems have all been solved—were, indeed, being solved by the uncommitted while those incapable of facing reality were pursuing their myth. How hard it is to be just in these matters! Of course, it is a fact that men without a dream have improved Negro-white relations, taught labor and management to mitigate their conflicts, extended social security, etc., etc. But the real and remaining problem that vexed those sensitive and desperate enough to dream the dream of community Mr. Kempton does not trouble to mention: the drying up of creativity, the flight to conformity,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the obsession with violence, the enervating fear of war and poverty, the alienation of men from each other, from their work, and from the natural world itself. Has our revulsion from the 30's gone so far that we have to say things like this as if they were a revelation?

In America no large portion of the working class was ever impelled toward Communism; not economic but moral dissatisfaction drove a sizable portion of the intellectuals into the arms of the Communists. To call their real revulsion from real lacks in our life a flight from reality is utterly misleading. True, they were not especially good people, these marginal malcontents, not if measured by the goodness they dreamed of, since they were hopelessly children of the world they despised. They were, God knows, no worse than the "innocent" who never flirted with Communism—rather a little better in their discontent, their unwillingness to confuse, like Mr. Kempton, man's essential loneliness with his special lostness in an industrialized, dehumanized society.

YET it is Mr. Kempton's temperamental inability to think of man as truly a political animal that gives his book its special value and appeal. To him the struggle over leadership in a union, the fight for a program in a party is a matter not of issues but of personal antipathies and private passions. There is something ironically apt in an author who is capable of believing only in the lonely person writing about a period which found it hard to believe in the person at all. For the uninitiated reader, who never even sat in the largest mass meeting of the most thinly spread front organization, perhaps this is the only way of communicating some sense of the times: not in terms of insight and understanding, but of the *feel* of the thing.

But even the simplest soul must find it hard to convince himself finally that the Communist movement is simply the sum total of the pathologies of its members. In the midst of biographical detail and psychological surmise, one longs for the evident, the obvious historical or political fact, for the rich and complicated social context in which Mr. Kempton's heroes and villains lived their individual lives. There are two lacks which seem to me especially disabling.

The first is any specific understanding of the relationship of the American radical movement to Russia and the Communist International. I find in Mr. Kempton's book no awareness of the decisive fact that at the moment when Communist-oriented individuals were entering for the first time positions of influence in the American government and in the trade unions, all autonomy in national Communist parties had disappeared. Russia, itself hopelessly committed to autocracy, was making even the most trivial local decisions for all member countries. One of the things that gives the appearance of utter madness to American Communism is the fact that its tactics were a response not to American conditions but to European-Asiatic affairs as understood by parochial and ill-educated members of the Russian Politburo. The very decision of a Communist organizer in Akron, Ohio, to learn or not to learn to dance or play bridge was dictated by what a leading Bulgarian member of the Comintern had said at the Sixth Party Congress.

More than this, American comrades (and at their proper remove, sympathizers, fellow-travelers, etc.) came to live in the half-invented world of the party press and to judge themselves by its editorials rather than by the reactions of their neighbors. If there is a legendary world that replaced the real world for the vanguard of the 30's, this is it, and not the quite proper notion of the indivisibility of mankind. What baffled American Communists was the fact that what was real abroad remained lunacy or a game here. If a slight difference in doctrine made or broke the Chinese Revolution, why did it not also matter cataclysmically on the campus of City College? Ben Gitlow, one of Mr. Kempton's favorite, misunderstood examples, "shambling from one splinter group to another, still hoping to find the true light somewhere in their weak phosphorescence," differs from a tragic Trotsky or a triumphant Tito only by the accident of his living in the United States. But this immense joke on Gitlow and history and us, Mr. Kempton is not political enough to appreciate.

For similar reasons, he fails to understand that there is not even in his sense a single "myth" of the 30's, that inside the Communist mind there is no unified 30's at all, but rather two distinct and contradictory "myths": the surviving super-revolutionary dream of the Third Period; and after 1935, the genteel dream of conformity proper to the Popular Front. This is a clue to all sorts of discrepancies which Mr. Kempton tries vainly to analyze in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This *I Believe*

by Julian Huxley*

"As a biologist, but also as a human being, I want to affirm the unique importance of love in life—an affirmation badly needed in a tormented age like ours, where violence and disillusion have joined forces with undigested technological advance to produce an atmosphere of cynicism and crude materialism.

"Love is indispensable. Mother love is indispensable for children's healthy and happy growth, both physical and spiritual. Personal love is indispensable both for the continuance of the species, and for the full development of the individual. Love is part of personal education; through love, the self learns to grow. Love of beauty and of all lovely and wonderful things is equally indispensable for our growth and the realization of our possibilities. It brings reverence and a sense of transcendence into personal love, and indeed into all of life. Love is a positive emotion, an enlargement of life; it leads on toward greater fulfillment and counteracts human hate and destructive impulses.

"Let the final word be that of a poet who was also a man of science—Robert Bridges: '. . . God's worshiper looking on any beauty falleth straightway in love; . . . love is a fire in whose devouring flames all earthly ills are consumed'."

Published as a public service by

THE WELCH GRAPE JUICE COMPANY, INC.

J. M. Kaplan, President

*ALL ABOUT LOVE
By Julian Huxley
Look Magazine—July 12, 1955

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terms of personal limitation and cowardice: the sudden collapse of the "Proletarian Novel" in the middle of the decade, the replacement of the Edmund Wilsons by the Donald Ogden Stewarts as the intellectual mouthpieces of Communism, the contrast between the amazing spread and minimum effectiveness of the front organizations, the shifts in trade union policy, etc. Even the odd contrast of Hiss and Chambers, to which Mr. Kempton dedicates an interesting chapter, rests upon their embodying the two contrasting myths which arise ultimately from the maneuverings of the Russian Foreign Office.

The price which Mr. Kempton pays for preferring a personal to a contextual approach is great enough in political matters; but there at least it reveals from time to time the real way in which tics of character actuated men who saw themselves as the personifications of the march of history. In the field of literature, the same sort of narrowing down brings much slighter rewards—and Mr. Kempton's essay called "The Social Muse" is for me the least effective in the book. This seems an especial shame, because we have still no satisfactory study of the general literary scene in the 30's and of the "Proletarian Novel" in particular. In setting up his customary sentimental melodrama of a reality-loving hero set against a group of myth-ridden failures, Mr. Kempton has drafted James T. Farrell to play the Joe Curran of the literary world.

Now Farrell is beyond question a decent, dogged, and admirable man, who has never betrayed his real if limited talent; but as a writer, he is far from being the most successful or interesting of the period. There is in him no new technical achievement, no breakthrough to a new way of seeing or rendering reality; but there was during those years one figure who, though he died before resolving all his problems of technique and feeling, did catch in three novels the bitterness, the mad humor, the tempo of the times. This is, of course, Nathaniel West, whom Mr. Kempton does not mention.

And there was, in addition, one novel whose pathos and truth make it the most distinguished piece of fiction based on Jewish life in America. This is Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep,* a book Mr. Kempton misleadingly lumps together with *Studs Lonigan* as "unvarnished" and "without much grace"—an example of "plebeian naturalism." Actually, it is the adaption of Joycean techniques to a border region where two cultures meet—a constant shifting from the mind to the world, from symbol to fact, from poetic levels of language to the grossest talk of the street. The introductory chapter alone could stand as a short story capable of redeeming ten years of literature with its spare rendition of all the rage and hopelessness of a Castle Garden reunion of husband and wife. Henry Roth, who after this single novel lapsed into silence, has never had the recognition due him —and Mr. Kempton's cursory dismissal will not help.

The chief task confronting a historian of the literature of the 30's is to define the typical novel of the period, not simply to describe books that happened to be written in that decade. Indeed, some novels written then (Faulkner's the *Sound and the Fury* is an example) belong in tone and inspiration to the 20's; though *Sanctuary* by the same author belongs, perhaps alone among his works, to the era of the Great Depression. What is the difference? Some doctrinaire and artificial definition of the Proletarian Novel out of the *New Masses* will, of course, not do at all. It is not a matter of political allegiance, though the influence of Marxism at some remove is a requisite; books as different in commitment as Wyndham Lewis's *Revenge for Love,* R. P. Warren's *At Heaven's Gate,* Hemingway's *To Have and to Have Not,* Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon,* reflect what is essential: a vision of the world so desperate that it breaks through the lyrical self-pity characteristic of the 20's to a kind of impersonal rage and nausea.

There is another sort of depression literature, too—the kind of sentimental, middlebrow melodrama practiced variously by such authors as Budd Schulberg and the John Steinbeck of *Grapes of Wrath.* But this is only accidentally and by virtue of subject matter implicated in the world of the 30's; change the setting a little, make the redeeming hero a priest rather than a Communist organizer and one can play it out with the same writers, director, and cast in the mid-50's, as *On the Waterfront* eloquently testifies. No, the real sensibility and passion of the depression years for me find their literary expression in the penultimate scene of Nathaniel West's least popular book, now long out of print, *A Cool Million: or The Dismantling of Lemuel Pitkin.* The protagonist (who is later to become the hero of an American fascist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

movement) stands on the stage of a cheap theater between two comics, who belabor him with rolled-up newspapers until his wooden leg, his artificial arm, his false teeth and glass eye roll out on to the floor while the crowd howls in delight. Or there is Faulkner's impotent Popeye, spawn of alleys, slobbering over someone else's lust.

Here, in the poet's sense of the word, is the true "myth" of the 30's: the sense of sterility, the despair, the outrage before the senseless waste of the human turned crazy laughter and at last art; but for most people this is too strong, too "morbid," too *real* a vision to be endured. And so we do not have finally any shared myth of the age. The 30's do not yet exist in our common imagination—as do, for instance, the 20's, securely fixed in a single continuous legend from John Held Jr. to Scott Fitzgerald.

This imaginative vacuum the newspaper accounts of confessions and accusations and invocations of the Fifth Amendment cannot fill; and it is into this vacuum that Mr. Kempton has nobly rushed. What he gives us is no more real poetry than it is real history; but it is a substitute for what the literature of the times has not given, perhaps cannot ever give to more than a few. It is the beginning of the search for an age; and it has encouraged me to rummage a little in the untidy attic of my own mind for what I was surer than I should have been that I had safely stowed away. For this at least I am grateful to Mr. Kempton.

Liberalism Aborted

THE STRANGE CAREER OF JIM CROW. By C. VANN WOODWARD. Oxford. 155 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by HENRY F. GRAFF

IN *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (consisting of the James W. Richard Lectures in History delivered at the University of Virginia in 1954), C. Vann Woodward comes to grips with both the facts and the fictions of segregation. Woodward destroys the myth that Jim Crow laws and regulations arose with Reconstruction and are, therefore, an inseparable part of the Southerner's conception of how he must order his affairs so that the races may "live together." What Woodward presents is a sharp portrait of an institution that actually sprang up in the 1890's as a response to some

Billy Eagle Wing's Last Stand

Billy is one of America's forgotten children —he is a Navajo Indian, an innocent victim of neglect and denial of opportunity. At 9 he already faces grave danger. His health is fair now, but he has no defense against the bitter cold of winter. He has no coat, no sturdy shoes.

His father, a hard-working sheepherder, ekes out a meager living on the reservation. He has high hopes for Billy's future, for a life with opportunity and usefulness. But he can do nothing for Billy to give him a chance.

You can help Billy or another needy Navajo child through the Child Sponsorship plan of Save the Children Federation. For just $8 a month, $96 a year, you will provide "your" child with funds to buy warm clothing, sturdy shoes and other needed items. You may also write to him.

This is *Billy's last stand*, against the poverty and misery that surround him and darken his future. As one of America's "first citizens" and inheritor of a glorious tradition, he deserves a chance for a better life.

A contribution in any amount will help.

SCF National Sponsors include: Faith Baldwin, Mrs. Mark W. Clark, Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lynn Fontanne, Henry R. Luce.

SAVE THE CHILDREN FEDERATION Estabi. 1932
345 East 46 Street, New York 17, N. Y.

- I would like to sponsor a Navajo child for one year. I will pay $96 for one year. Enclosed is payment for ☐ the full year, ☐ $24 for the first quarter, ☐ $8 for the first month.
- I cannot sponsor a child, but I want to help by giving $..... Ct-1

Name.....
Address.....
City ..... Zone..... State.....

Contributions are deductible from federal income tax.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the problems of modern America, only to become itself one of the chief problems of American democracy. Much of what he has to say here he foreshadowed in his brilliant biography of *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* and in his monumental *Origins of the New South,* which established his reputation as the leading historian of the post-Civil War South.

In this examination of the central and controlling custom of 20th-century Dixie, Woodward is celebrating the passing of an idea. The idea of Jim Crow was born as early as Jackson's day, but as a way of life it did not make its full appearance until the end of the 19th century, in McKinley's administration. The racism on which it battened is at least as old as the settlement of America, but achieved its florescence in "Manifest Destiny." Surely it is not accidental that the institutionalization of segregation in the South should have coincided with our venture into political imperialism at the end of the 19th century.

Curiously, Jim Crow's appearance was made under the most "decent" auspices. Not least influential were Northern liberals anxious to placate the South, and disillusioned Southern Populists who only recently had been carrying the standard of economic reform. But most important in supplying leadership to the Jim Crow movement were the Southern Progressives. Woodward, in detailing their role, sheds light on the whole Progressive movement, North *and* South. Everywhere the Progressive's blind spot, he shows, was the Negro.

The Progressive was busy advancing a moralistic, near-utopian, monolithic society, and he rejected pluralism. Looking backward longingly to the pre-industrial days of an independent yeomanry, he conjured up an uncomplicated, ethical, self-helping, non-union, and non-intellectual society. His hero was Anglo-Saxon, clean-shaven, upstanding, an image projected in the Gibson girl and in the all-American boy. In the world of the Progressive, the foreigner could be accepted only after he had been "Americanized." The "melting pot" was an ingenious invention to boil off unpleasant national differences. As for the Negro, the Progressive patronized him—the man of color could never conform to the "ideal" American type.

While Woodward demonstrates that "the South's adoption of extreme racism was due not so much to a conversion as it was to a relaxation of the opposition," he provides convincing evidence that the enthusiasm for Jim Crow, if not the leadership itself, came from the "best" men—like Hoke Smith of Georgia and Josephus Daniels of North Carolina. They could not accept Progressive economics or politics or morality without going along with the racism. For Southern Progressives, racism was almost the proof of the Progressive ideology, of the "purity" of the ideal. It was the appropriate handmaiden for the Progressive 20th-century American groping toward the "new democracy" and "new nationalism." As one Southerner wrote: *"In fine, disfranchisement of the negroes has been concomitant with the growth of political and social solidarity among the whites.* The more white men recognize sharply their kinship with their fellow whites, and the more democracy in every sense of the term spreads among them, the more the negro is compelled to 'keep his place'." It was this outlook which entered into Wilsonianism to a degree that has been largely forgotten.

It is clear that immigration restriction in the 1920's grew out of the same conditions that made Jim Crow a Southern arrangement. The Quota Law of 1924, for example, was an attempt to maintain the population composition of 1890, and for all practical purposes to close the door to those who did not "fit" the Progressive ideal. This was a triumph nationally of the underlying assumption about the nature of the American community that the Progressives were on the verge of establishing when they were rudely interrupted by the war. It is not surprising that throughout the 20's Northern opposition to the South's race policy was almost non-existent.

Subsequently, in the course of the deepening economic depression, Jim Crow began to appear even in the North, and a national silence enveloped the entire question of civil rights. The New Deal Democrats, reaching out for political allies, wooed the Negro from the party of emancipation. In return for votes, they offered increased opportunity, but for the most part they left segregation alone. Then, suddenly, and it seemed inexplicably, the dam burst and the flood of opposition to Jim Crow inundated American life. What had happened?

Woodward cites the role the Negro himself played in his own second liberation. He lists, also, the war against Nazi Germany, which was an obvious call to put our own house in order, and the cold war that continues to put the same challenge to America. Prosperity, too,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inclines us to act magnanimously. But Woodward indicates that, like other democratic advances—including even the widening of the suffrage—Jim Crow's demise is a consequence of the changing needs of society, and not necessarily of reform of the spirit. In the middle of the 20th century, our foreign relations and efforts require us to assume, internationally, a consistent liberal posture, including a liberal attitude on the question of race. ". . . the ironic reflection is unavoidable," writes Woodward, "that desegregation—whether a subject of rejoicing or not—is itself in part a by-product of the very wave of nationalism and conformity that is so justly deplored."

Woodward raises some fundamental questions about the dynamics of American liberalism. His grim story will not encourage liberals to feel self-congratulatory. Jim Crow came on the scene in the heyday of Progressivism, under whose gaudy banner the main body of American liberals enrolled—for they had no other place to go and failed to make one; it retreats before the advances of Negro self-improvement and the pressure of unpleasant events on the other side of the world. What are we to say, then, for the liberal conscience that accepted the color line a half-century ago, and today blandly takes credit for the end of segregation? One is tempted to answer that if the liberal's political victories are often illusory, up to now his conquests of the history books has been real. Woodward's study provides fresh evidence that democratic advances are not so much the result of liberal success as they are of reaction's failure.

Book Reviewers in This Issue

Nathan Glazer's review of Samuel A. Stouffer's *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties* appeared last month.

Henry F. Graff is associate professor of history at Columbia and author of *Bluejackets with Perry in Japan* (1952).

Judd L. Teller's contributions on Jewish affairs are well known to Commentary readers.

Leslie A. Fiedler is a prolific essayist on literary and political subjects.

Granville Hicks's most recent book was *Where We Came Out.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This year for Rosh Hashanah give the Canadian Whisky that's

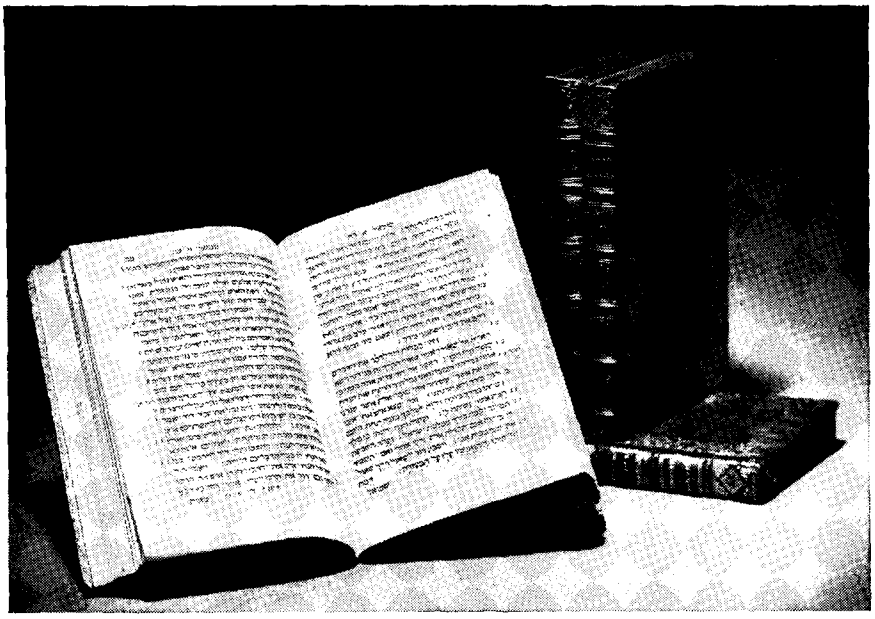
IN HIGHEST FAVOR AMONG IMPORTED WHISKIES

In HONOR of the Occasion
Give the Gift that HONORS

Seagram's VO

CANADIAN WHISKY—A BLEND... OF RARE SELECTED WHISKIES
THIS WHISKY IS SIX YEARS OLD • 86.8 PROOF • SEAGRAM-DISTILLERS COMPANY, NEW YORK, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



HEBREW BIBLE printed in Amsterdam 1659-1660 by Joseph Athias. The First Edition of one of the most beautiful Hebrew Bibles ever produced and the first to be divided into verses. The text was based on Buxtorf's 6th rabbinical Bible. In this rare and unusual Bible the Five Books of Moses are followed by the scrolls.

"Peace be both unto thee,
and peace be to thy house,
and peace be unto
all that thou hast."

1 SAMUEL 25:6

FORD MOTOR COMPANY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No other premium gas gives you the Amoco

OCTANE BONUS!

Extra energy on the road, where it counts!

Other gasolines get their high laboratory octane ratings by adding lead! But lead can leave harmful deposits that keep valuable octane from working. Then some of the power fails to reach the road.

And usable road octane is the only octane that matters—it's the only practical way to determine the value of the octane in the gas you buy.

Only the new, unleaded Amoco-Gas gives you a unique Octane BONUS

Today, from the world's largest, most advanced petroleum Ultraformer, comes the new high-octane Amoco-Gas—the one gas that needs no lead! Every ounce of octane-energy in the new Amoco-Gas is *usable* octane in your car. No lead deposits can form on engine parts. No octane is wasted fighting them.

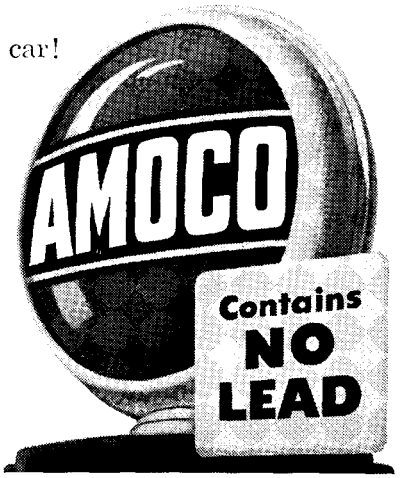
Result? More octane is put to work turning the wheels than for any leaded gas you can buy. *That's* what we call the big Amoco-Gas Octane Bonus.

Try it—it does a wonderful thing for your car!

The white gas with the

Octane BONUS

Bonus Mileage—because it contains no lead!



©AMERICAN OIL COMPANY

Hear "Edward R. Murrow and the News," 7:45 P.M., Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, CBS-Radio Network
See Edward R. Murrow in "Person to Person," 10:30 P.M., Fridays, CBS-TV Network

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED